



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

FARCHIBALD

McKACKNEY

**(Collector
of
Whiskers)**



E. S. Stark

J. ARCHIBALD McKACKNEY
(Collector of Whiskers)

This One



OF31-TGO-UNRO





A beard of rare dimensions that would create the bass
of a whole symphony orchestra.

J. ARCHIBALD Mc KACKNEY

(Collector of Whiskers)

Being *certain episodes* taken from the diary
and notes of *that estimable gentleman-*
student and now for the first time set forth.

EDITED BY

RALPH D. PAINE

Author of "The Story of Martin Coe,"
"The Greater America," etc.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY WALLACE MORGAN



NEW YORK
THE OUTING PUBLISHING COMPANY
MCMVII

Copyrighted, 1907, by
THE OUTING PUBLISHING COMPANY
All rights reserved

PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

THE remarkable researches and discoveries of Mr. J. Archibald McKackney have hitherto been buried in the monographs of the American Society for the Promotion of Curious Science. Mr. McKackney, it may be remarked, is an elderly gentleman of great wealth and an eager mental activity whose estate is one of the show-places of the New England coast. For several years he had been engaged in assembling his unique collection of Human Whiskers before his discovery and employment of their musical vibrations made a world-wide stir among the students of Acoustics and Harmony.¹

¹ For technical references see Annual Reports Am. Soc. P. C. S., Vol. XII., pp. 287-324 (1901); Vol. XIV., pp. 103-149 (1903). Also Appendix B. Revised Edition—*Der Mechanismus der Menschlichen Sprache nebst Beschreibung einer Sprechenden Maschine von Wolfgang von Kempelen* (Vienna). Also latest Edition, *Theory of Harmony*, Weitzman.

Also *A Critical Analysis of the McKackney Theory of the Analogy between the Æolian Harp and the Human Beard or Whisker*. (Pamphlet by Dr. Bruno Heilig, published by Leighton & Leighton, London, 1904.

Publisher's Preface

For the information of the layman it is perhaps well to refer to the circumstances which preceded the organization of the now famous Hirsute Orchestra, as described in the following pages. Having wearied of the more commonplace objects of the collector's ardor, including Japanese pottery, unset gems and Roman coins, Mr. McKackney turned with the utmost enthusiasm to the task of obtaining the photographs, paintings and drawings of all the styles, patterns, designs and front elevations of the beards, whiskers and mustachios that have ornamented the human face from the days of the ancient Egyptians.¹

He has visited almost all the inhabited cor-

¹ "My first impulse toward this field of investigation was inspired as the result of an idle hour in a crowded railway station. I began to note the whiskers of the hurrying pedestrians and was surprised to discover that their patterns were as severally distinct and individual as the faces of their wearers. I counted no less than seventeen successive types, no two of which were identical in any respect. It occurred to me at that time that if such a wide variety could be found in this casual observation, there must be an opportunity for a scientific study of these highly entertaining and important human phenomena." (Extract from the owner's Introduction to the *Illustrated Catalogue of the McKackney Collection.*)

Publisher's Preface

ners of the globe in the hope of adding new trophies to his classified list of one hundred and eighty-seven distinct or catalogued varieties of whiskers, and the walls of his immense library are covered with bewildering sequences of facial landscapes.

In selecting the following incidents from among his manifold experiences Mr. McKackney has attempted to present only the more popular and entertaining features of his avocation. He does not introduce, for example, that important phase of his activity which deals with the whisker as a new field for nature study.¹ His more serious and wholly scientific work, "The Whisker Book," will not be ready for publication (in three quarto volumes) before 1909. Its scope and the enthusiasm with which Mr. McKackney has devoted himself to the immense task of writing the final word on the whisker in Art, History and Music, may be glimpsed in these lines of

¹ This topic was ably presented in a paper read before the faculty and students of the University of Zweitzig on the occasion of the bestowal of an honorary degree upon Dr. J. Archibald McKackney.

Publisher's Preface

an address delivered before the American Society for the Promotion of Curious Research:

"I am proud, gentlemen, to have had the honor of adding, within the last year, no fewer than fourteen new species to the catalogue of my collections. I would rather make two whiskers grow where one grew before than to gain fame in any other way under Heaven. From the steppes of Siberia to the steaming jungles of Madagascar I have hunted whiskers at peril of life and limb. Among civilized races it is possible that the whisker may be doomed to extinction, since custom ordains that the devastating razor should more and more wreak its handiwork. I hope, however, before it shall be too late, to complete the monumental work which has absorbed my energies for eight long years."

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I THE EPISODE OF THE TITIAN BEARD .	3
II THE PURSUIT OF THE HIRSUTE ORCHESTRA	27
III THE TRAGEDY OF THE PEASANT'S REVENGE	59
IV THE EPISODE OF THE SENTIMENTAL ANARCHIST	83
V THE TALE OF THE WANDERING BOOK-CASE	113
VI THE TALE OF THE SHIPWRECKED PARENT	139
VII THE ABDICATION OF KING WILKINS I .	161

ILLUSTRATIONS

A beard of rare dimensions that would create the
bass of a whole symphony orchestra . *Frontispiece*

	PAGE
"I'm looking for a game where they give away ham-and-eggs for first prizes"	6
"The magnificent torrent of his beard"	11
"I was plucked from my chair, and borne toward the fire-place"	21
"Wilkins smothered an amazed oath, while his rugged face was a study of novel emotions"	35
"Airily twisting the needle-like ends of a rat-tailed mustache"	45
"Now a fraction off the bottom. The tone is almost perfect"	67
"Wilkins brought the hairy exile home with him"	70
"He was sore about something and ran amuck with a big pair of scissors"	78
"The coveted stranger had suddenly and violently fallen in love"	87

Illustrations

	PAGE
“Struck a heroic attitude as he shouted” . . .	98
“It seemed to rain cans of corned beef, tongue and deviled ham”	103
“Snipped a generous handful from the end of the captive beard”	117
“The wooden-bottomed chair caught me in the small of the back”	129
“The wretch was crawling toward the box on hands and knees”	135
“A sprightly old man darted into view and ran down the gangplank”	143
“Hallelujah, I won by an eighth of an inch” .	147
“And laugh in his bushy beard till the tears ran down into it”	155
“Behind him streamed scores of villagers” .	165
“Uncle Jedediah woke up with a snort” . . .	173
“Perhaps he would prefer to work out this problem for himself, Mr. J. Archibald McKackney”	177

**THE EPISODE OF
THE TITIAN BEARD**

J. ARCHIBALD McKACKNEY

(Collector of Whiskers)

CHAPTER I

THE EPISODE OF THE TITIAN BEARD¹

LATE in a bracing autumn afternoon I was playing golf on the links which adjoin my estate. I was alone save for the stimulating companionship of Colonel Bogey. While driving for the home green I pulled my shot so disastrously that the ball flew off at a sickening tangent and vanished in a dense woodland as if the devil were after it. Struggling through the underbrush with somewhat peevish comment, I headed for the tree against which the ball had struck. It must have caromed wide and far, for the search was bootless.

¹ The owner of the peerless Titian beard, Hank Wilkins, plays so important a part in the subsequent narratives that it seems advisable to preface them with this account of the singular manner in which the sailor man became the associate of Mr. McKackney. (Editor's Note.)

J. Archibald McKackney

I had wandered so far into the strip of woodland that as I paused to mop my face, an opening in the trees showed me a green valley and a hillside of pasture beyond, bounded by low stone walls. A man was moving across the pasture, and so vivid a patch of color gleamed against his dark coat that I waited and watched him with an interested eye. As the distant figure drew nearer I became more puzzled and intent.

Just then the sinking sun shot a slanting dazzle across the pasture and the dash of vivid crimson on the wayfarer's chest gleamed like a sheet of flame.

"Good Heavens," I muttered. "It is the man's whiskers! Nothing so very rare about the pattern *but that Titian red!* I have tried to find that peculiar shade among the whiskers of three continents. I must have his portrait in color, even if I am compelled to kidnap him. God bless me, but his beard is priceless! Why, I have heard of only one other such specimen, and before I could locate

4]

Episode of the Titian Beard

the owner he carelessly dropped a match in his whiskers, and they were utterly consumed. I wept at the news and am not ashamed of it."

Without more delay I plunged down the slope, clumsily leaped the brook and crawled over the stone wall of the pasture. The stranger was advancing at a leisurely gait, and as he halted to fill and light his pipe I shivered with an apprehension inspired by the recollection of the tragic experience which I had just called to mind. My quarry was a middle-aged, stocky person, whose features and garments were battered to the edge of the disreputable. Above his flaming beard emerged a sun-burnt cheek, and beneath his shaggy red brows twinkled a merry and unabashed eye. As we met in the cow-path I remarked as calmly as possible:

"Pleasant weather, sir."

The stranger replied in a voice that rumbled from his chest:

"It's all right for them that can afford to toddle around with them silly little sticks you've got in that bag. I'm lookin' for a

J. Archibald McKackney



“I’m lookin’ for a game where they give away ham-and-eggs for first prizes.”

game where they give away ham-and-eggs for first prizes.”

I hesitated, but the spirit of the collector was rampant and another glance at the peerless sweep of Titian whiskers compelled me to throw prudence to the winds.

“Will you not do me the honor of coming home to dine with me?” I asked. “My little
6]

Episode of the Titian Beard

place is on the other side of the links. It will be a rare pleasure for me, I assure you."

The bearded one blinked and tugged at his hirsute treasure with his two hands as he cried:

"What kind of a josh is this? I'm nothing but a stranded seafarin' man making his way cross country to Coveport in the hope of finding a berth aboard a coastin' vessel. Thanks, but I think your head-piece may need calkin'."

The upshot of this was that J. Archibald McKackney, a gentleman of some wealth and station, found himself in the odd position of pleading with this derelict wayfarer to come and dine in a mansion. Red Whiskers still eyed me with an air of gloomy misgiving, but at last consented with the frank comment:

"I must be the lost Charlie Ross, and as for you—well, the keeper was lookin' the other way when you broke out for an afternoon romp."

Pleased with my success, I sighed as I reflected that with my sanity already impeached it might be extremely difficult to broach the

J. Archibald McKackney

topic of the whiskers. However, we managed to cross the golf course without more bickering until my home loomed ahead, set far back amid a park-like expanse of grounds. The seafaring pilgrim balked in his tracks and shook his head so violently that his beard waggled like a crimson banner in a big wind.

"I've heard they stow the rich lunatics in such elegant dry docks as this while their stearin' gear is being repaired," he shouted. "But Hank Wilkins don't belong in this gilded bug-house, not by a ding-donged sight."

The mutiny was suppressed only when a head-gardener and a gate-keeper happened to appear. Their attitude toward me was so sane and respectful and my orders were so intelligently delivered that the pilgrim gulped down his fears and walked up the rambling path with somewhat nervous tread. In his time Mr. Hank Wilkins must have seen many curious things, but when he was ushered into the library by a liveried footman, his ruddy countenance became positively pale with emo-

Episode of the Titian Beard

tion. I could not help chuckling as I viewed the agitation of my guest.

"Welcome to my bachelor quarters, Mr. Wilkins," I cried. "Will you have something to drink before you go to your room to dress for dinner?"

"Can a duck swim?" fervently exclaimed Mr. Hank Wilkins. "Rye, if you please, sir, and I begin to think your intellect is getting its bearings. I never heard a saner speech—but all I've got to do about dressing for dinner is to comb the cockle-burrs out of my whiskers and report all standin'."

"Yes, your whiskers, of course," I absently murmured. "First in your thoughts, of course. Pardon me—yes, you will find your clothes laid out and a man to help you into them."¹

¹ Mr. McKackney being of a spare figure, it would have been impossible for the burly Hank Wilkins to insert himself in evening clothes belonging to his host, even with the aid of a shoe-horn. The butler, however, was a fine, upstanding man, who owed his long tenure of service to the possession of a set of the dignified gray whiskers popularly known as "mud-guards." It is to be presumed that some of his extra raiment was requisitioned. (Editor's Note.)

J. Archibald McKackney

Mr. Wilkins sputtered and choked as four fingers of aged whisky slid down his dusty throat. Then like one in a dream he rolled in the wake of the footman, nor did I observe at the time that the decanter was still tightly clutched in the fist of my guest.

It befell, therefore, that while the outer man was being adorned, the inner man was being mightily refreshed. Before the valet swept the crimson beard aside to encircle the bull-neck of Mr. Wilkins with a white tie, the blithe little devils in the decanter had banished all his fears. Beaming, but by no means befogged, the sailorman returned below stairs, a heroic figure in evening clothes whose dazzling front was wholly eclipsed by the magnificent torrent of his beard. I saw him do a few steps of a hornpipe in the hall and bow low before a mirror, but he assumed an imposing dignity of bearing as he joined me in the library.

"If I don't come out of this pipe-dream soon, and I'm to shift myself into these clothes again," said my guest with great emotion]

Episode of the Titian Beard



“The magnificent torrent of his beard.”

phasis, “I’ll chop these whiskers off, so help me.”

“Chop those whiskers off!” I echoed with a catch in my voice. “My God, Wilkins,

[11

J. Archibald McKackney

don't say that again, I beg of you. Your beard, I—I——"

"But they douse my gold buttons and shiny shirt," he protested, and then wishing to humor me, he added in soothing accents:

"Now don't get dippy again. You've been doing well. If you admire my whiskers take 'em as a gift."

"Perhaps I ought to explain," I began, just as the butler announced that dinner was served. As the sailor heaved himself out of his chair, his roving eye was drawn to a line of portraits on the opposite wall which displayed some of the choicest specimens of my collections.

"Oh, look at the oakum-faced sundowners, millions of 'em," he exclaimed. "I've fathomed his soft spot. He's gone wrong on whiskers, poor man."

As Mr. Wilkins lumbered into the dining room he sonorously chanted the impromptu refrain which was weaving in his brain:

Episode of the Titian Beard

“ Whiskers short and whiskers long,
Whiskers weak and whiskers strong,
Why, *this* is the place where *I* belong.”

My robustious guest was in a mood even more mellow and melodious after his glass had been thrice filled with champagne, and with his beard parted and flung back over his shoulders like a pair of brilliant sash-curtains he burst into snatches of deep-sea chanties mingled with the original couplet:

“ Where the seas are high and the wind so gay
Blows through my whiskers *every* day.”

At length I was able to stem the tide of convivial song and roaring talk and broached the burning topic at issue:

“ I wish to paint your beard, Mr. Wilkins, in order to add it to my collection, some of whose exhibits caught your notice in the library.”

“ Paint my nose sky-blue and pink rings around my dead-lights,” thundered Mr. Wilkins, as he pounded the table so that the

J. Archibald McKackney

glasses danced jigs. "Some of 'em plays they're kings or trains of choo-choo cars, but whiskers is certainly harmless and diverting."

"We will have the first sitting to-morrow morning, then," said I. "I am a fair amateur with oils and I can assure you a creditable likeness."

"Don't hurry it, sir," anxiously put in the sailor. "It's a shame to spoil a beard like mine to save time, which was made for slaves."

I had explored some of the remote parts of the Seven Seas which were familiar to this deep-water sailor, and the later hours in the library fled with a flowing sheet. Mr. Wilkins became hugely interested in my hobby after fathoming the ardor with which I had braved dangers and hardships in quest of rare whiskers, and before midnight we had learned to esteem each other as men of uncommon parts and experiences.

It was to be regretted that at length Mr. Wilkins became so drowsy that he suddenly fell asleep in his chair. Nor could he be

14]

Episode of the Titian Beard

awakened by shouting, shaking, or tickling in the ribs. The servants had gone to bed, and after tugging in vain at the formidable bulk of my guest, I decided to let him remain as he was. I reflected that he was comfortable, and that whenever he should happen to come to he could find his way to his room. 'Pon my soul, he was like a dead man. I surveyed with the most respectful admiration the flamboyant and unique beard of the sleeper and went upstairs.

Some time later in the night I was aroused by a crashing sound and a scuffling as of a struggle somewhere above my head. Still dazed with sleep I pushed the electric button at my bedside and waited for my valet. There was no response, and after scrambling to the floor I turned on the lights and rang the butler's bell. After waiting through interminable moments I concluded that in some mysterious fashion my household was prevented from coming to my aid.

Tiptoeing carefully into the hall I stole down the broad staircase and fairly ran for the front door. It had flashed into my mind

J. Archibald McKackney

that the sailor might be conducting a lone-handed series of depredations. I thought at once of the valuables below stairs, and I bitterly regretted that I had not taken more precautions to guard my collection of precious stones, a fad of my earlier years, during which I had sought to make my collection of rubies the finest in the world.

But while I was fumbling with the lock, the sound of a prodigious yawn echoed from the library. I cast a swift glance over my shoulder and was relieved beyond words to see Mr. Hank Wilkins stretching himself in the depths of his luxurious arm-chair.

"I will have to trust him," I gasped to myself. "I believe that a desperate gang of scoundrels is after my rubies. I was warned only a week ago to take them to the city for safekeeping."

I fled into the library and Mr. Wilkins blinked and grinned at the sight of my agitated figure in pink pajamas.

"Worried about my getting away with the silver, Commodore?" he asked.

Episode of the Titian Beard

"No, no," I stammered, "but I have been foolish enough to keep in that small safe behind you the finest collection of unset rubies in the United States. Burglars are in the house. They have silenced or killed my servants. They will kill us for those jewels. What can we do? Quick, man."

The mind of Mr. Wilkins had become clear and alert, and he was a man to meet such a crisis as this without flinching.

"If they've captured all hands but us, there must be a gang of 'em with desperate business on hand," he whispered hoarsely. "And we can't get away. And, by Jupiter, we don't want to. Let 'em come. Here, open that safe, quick."

"They will blow it open if I don't, I suppose," I groaned. "We cannot hide the rubies now. They will turn this room upside down when they find us here."

"I heard steps up aloft somewheres," muttered Mr. Wilkins. "Open that safe, I tell you. There, that's more like it." While I was twisting the knob of the combination, the

J. Archibald McKackney

sailor grabbed a bottle of mucilage from the writing table. As I withdrew a small tray on which the clustered gems gleamed like drops of blood, Mr. Hank Wilkins swept up a handful, let a stream of mucilage fall on them, and rolled the gems in his two fists. Then, two and three at a time, he stowed the rubies in the burrowed depths of his Titian beard. It was the work of seconds only to scoop up another fistful of treasure, smear the rubies with the gummy fluid and bury or *cache* them in this same flaming jungle where they clung secure and wholly invisible.

“Shut the safe and sit down calm and easy, sir,” he commanded me. “If the coast is clear, we may make a run for it yet.”

But as the sailor slipped toward the nearest window, hoping to find a way of retreat, three masked men appeared in the hall doorway. Three blue-barreled revolvers were leveled at me, and their muzzles looked to be as big as megaphones. The leader cried:

“Hands up. And you with the red whiskers, put 'em over your head. Ride herd on
18]

Episode of the Titian Beard

'em, Bill, and shoot if they bat an eye while we tackle the safe."

Mr. Hank Wilkins stood fixed with hands upraised in an attitude of patriarchal benediction while with an expression of humorous appreciation he listened to my heroic refusal to reveal the combination of the safe. It was not until the door had been blown off by the wrathful burglars that our plight became menacing. As soon as the empty tray was discovered the leader whirled on me with black oaths and yelled:

"We know the stuff is here. It ain't upstairs, and we'll blow your brains out if you don't give up."

The room was ransacked with destructive fury, desks broken open, cupboards smashed, while one burglar stood over me and pressed a revolver against my bald and fevered brow. Then the sailor was flung to the floor and bound with curtain cords, while our captors fairly ripped off our garments in their ruthless search.

"By —— ———," cried the leader, "toast

J. Archibald McKackney

old McKackney's feet and let him yell. The flunkies is all doped or sand-bagged. The rubies is in this room, we had the tip straight."

To the horror of the helpless sailor and to my own unutterable anguish, I was plucked from my chair and borne toward the fireplace in which smoldered a huge back-log. My struggles were so frantic and my cries so piercing that two of the rascals were wholly absorbed in this hideous task. The third was busily kicking to pieces the one surviving cabinet and Mr. Hank Wilkins was unnoticed for the moment.

With a mighty, grunting heave of his big chest, and with every splendid muscle swelled and taut, he strained against his bonds in a supreme effort. Nothing weaker than a wire cable could have withstood it. The curtain cords snapped and the sailor was on his feet with a bound like an angry cat. Before the nearest burglar could turn, Mr. Wilkins had hurled a mahogany chair at him. It sped like a twelve-inch shell, dashed his victim against

20]

Episode of the Titian Beard



“I was plucked from my chair and borne toward the fireplace.”

the wall with sickening impact and left him senseless. His revolver clattered from his limp hand, and Wilkins scooped it up as he ran. Before the pair of villains near the fireplace could do more than let me fall squirming

J. Archibald McKackney

across the fender, the sailor had shot one of them through the shoulder and beaten the other to the floor with the heavy butt of his weapon.

Having stood me on my feet, my rescuer disarmed his captives, made them fast to chairs with deft knots and hitches and flew upstairs to muster the servants. One by one he removed their gags and bonds, kicked and cuffed the effects of chloroform from their addled brains and drove them trooping down ahead of him. While they bandaged the hurts of the burglars I was able to steer my tottering limbs to the telephone and summon the police from Coveport.

By the time the captives had been carted away to the hospital, daylight was streaming through the library windows. It illumined with a splendid radiance the beard of Hank Wilkins, who was engaged in plucking from its incarnadined depths a wondrous store of jewels. I watched him with profound gratitude and admiration. The sailor paused in his task to chant a melodious inspiration:

Episode of the Titian Beard

“ Heigh, ho! Roll and go!
Rubies in his whiskers,
For he told me so.”

I grasped the hard fist of my guest and said with deep feeling:

“ You shall not roll and go from this house as long as it suits you to stay. There is a *man* behind that peerless Titian beard, and I owe you more than I can ever repay.”

“ My whiskers is my fortune, sir,” cheerily replied Mr. Wilkins, “ and they are yours to command, even if you want to dye ’em bottle-green. And here is the last ruby of the lot, sir, all safe and sound. I had to go deep into the underbrush to dig it out.”

“ I am in need of a faithful assistant,” I told the honest fellow with a chuckle, “ and I am inclined to dub you ‘ The Hair Apparent.’ ”

**THE PURSUIT OF
THE HIRSUTE ORCHESTRA**

CHAPTER II

THE PURSUIT OF THE HIRSUTE ORCHESTRA

I HAD hastened to my "work-shop," or laboratory, early in the morning of that memorable day. For months I had been groping my way toward a discovery which should set the world of science by the ears and crown the brow of J. Archibald McKackney with a unique kind of fame. My Whisker Collection, notable as it was, had almost ceased to focus my interests. My life was bound up in the array of electrical machinery, burnished spheres, rows of tuning forks and other complex apparatus which filled the long room up under the roof of my mansion. Even my loyal assistant, Hank Wilkins, had not been taken into my confidence. The former sailor-man was left to pore over the illustrated cata-

J. Archibald McKackney

logue of the McKackney Whisker Collection while I toiled behind locked doors.¹

Never can I forget the moment when I rushed into the upper hall and shouted down the stairway to Wilkins:

“Come up here. I’ve done it, by the Lord Harry. Hurry up. The grandest discovery of modern times. *You can hear it.* Beautiful, wonderful, amazing.”

I was dancing with impatience as the sailor fairly flew upstairs, his immense crimson beard streaming over his shoulders as if he had set studding-sails for a swift passage. Our strange adventures in search of rare types of whiskers had prepared him for the unexpected, but for once he was almost dismayed. I grasped his arm and led him into the workshop and pointed toward a row of rounded wooden blocks to which were attached arti-

¹ Mr. Wilkins was also engaged in a scientific problem of his own at this time, with the solution of which he hoped to surprise his employer. His secret task was doomed to failure however, and it was withheld from Mr. McKackney’s knowledge. Mr. Wilkins hoped to be able to compound a preparation which should make whiskers moth-proof in all climates. (Editor’s Note.)

The Pursuit of the Hirsute Orchestra

ficial whiskers of various lengths and patterns. The faithful fellow rubbed his eyes and his jaw dropped. If the display of false whiskers puzzled him, the maze of elaborate mechanisms to right and left fairly bewildered him. The series of bellows geared to a small engine and dynamo next drew his attention and his expression was so extraordinary that I managed to explain:

"I didn't mean to frighten you, Wilkins, and it will take time to batter this achievement into that thick skull of yours. Sit down and I will try to make it clear."

I could not restrain a nervous laugh, and my voice was not easily controlled as I mopped my face and went on:

"I *am* excited, Wilkins, and small wonder. After many heartbreaking failures and incredible effort, I have—I have—been able to apply the *theories of musical vibration to the human whisker*. For ages the winds of Heaven have been sweeping with wonderful melody through the whiskers of mankind, which has been deaf to the magic of their harmonies."

Wilkins made a brave rally and tried to meet my astounding statement half-way as he fairly shouted:

"The devil you say, sir! Then my peerless Titian beard must be a whole brass band. Do you mean to say you can play tunes on 'em?"

He had blindly stumbled on the very climax of my discovery, and as I waved my arm around the room I told him:

"That is what I hope to do, and before very long if you will help me. Did you ever see an Æolian harp?"

"One of those boxes full of strings that make soft and soothing sounds when tickled by the wind?" he replied. "Why, I sailed with a skipper that had one in his cabin skylight. But you could hear *that* music, and my whiskers have been dumb for thirty years."

Then I told him, as simply as possible, how after an exhaustive study of the laws of vibration and sound waves I had evolved the theory that there *must* be a similitude between the Æolian harp and the Human Whisker. The

30]

The Pursuit of the Hirsute Orchestra

instrument was but waiting for the player. But further progress had seemed hopeless after I discovered by experiment that the average vibrations of the Human Whisker when stirred by the wind range from ten thousand to forty thousand per second. Now it is well known, as I explained, that the practical range of the musical scale is hardly more than four thousand vibrations per second for the highest note of the piccolo flute. It was therefore evident that the sound of the vibrating whisker is beyond the reach of the human ear. This accounted for the failure of the human race to detect its own hirsute music, as Wilkins was quick to comprehend. And because these tones were inaudible without some means of greatly magnifying and recording sound, my most arduous efforts had been bent toward developing the powers of the microphone.

When under unusual mental pressure Mr. Hank Wilkins sometimes burst into snatches of impromptu doggerel, and before I could carry my explanation any farther he chanted with great vehemence:

J. Archibald McKackney

“Will I hear my whiskers singin’
When the wind is sou’-sou’-west?
And melodious music ringin’
From the region of my vest?”

I could not help smiling at his faith in my assertions and I hastened to finish my explanation. I told him how my specially devised improvements of the microphone, together with my newly discovered principles of sound wave motion, had enabled me to *hear* the tones of the Human Whisker when set in vibration by air currents, and that the resonators contrived by Hemholtz had shown me how to distinguish the fundamental notes from the confusing over-tones which determined the timbre or clang-tint.¹ Wilkins heard me out with admirable patience, although he pulled at his beard with nervous fingers as if eager to test his own share of hirsute harmony. When I paused he asked me if I could “tune

¹The Editor has omitted from Mr. McKackney's manuscript several pages of highly technical analysis of the principles of acoustics involved in his discovery. Such discussion more properly belong in the scientific work now in course of preparation.

The Pursuit of the Hirsute Orchestra

up a few bass or tenor whiskers and give him some action."

I moved over to my switchboard and halted only to tell him that the length and texture of the whisker determine the number of sound waves and therefore the vibratory pitch or note. "False whiskers will do for experiments," I added, "but they lack a certain fullness of tone which, I am sure, must be found in the living growth." Then I asked Wilkins to hold the receivers of the microphone battery to his ears while I started the bellows.

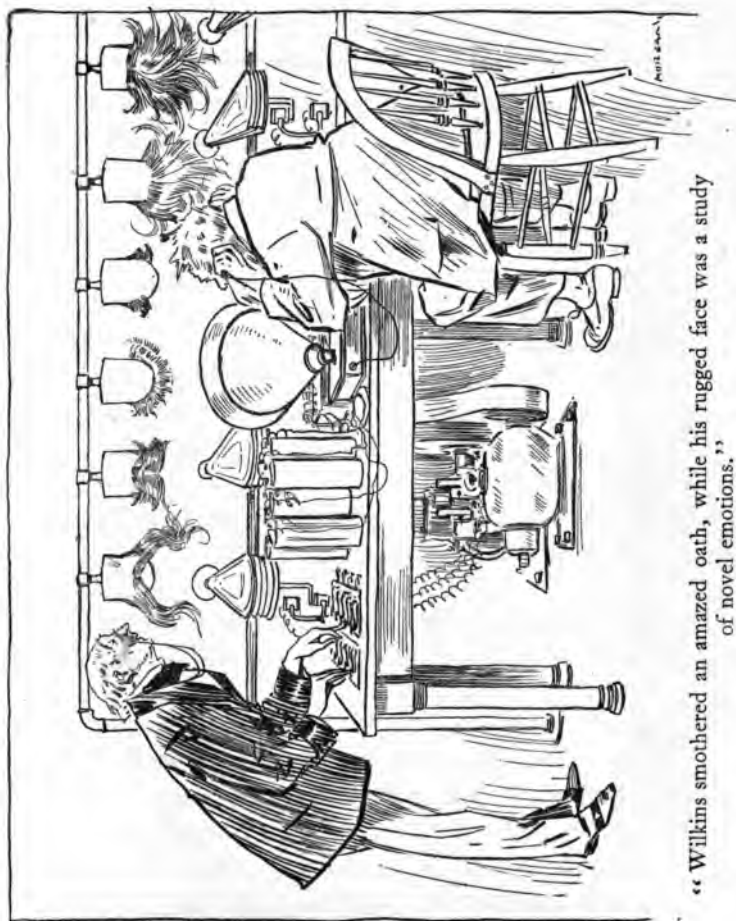
My assistant gingerly sat himself down at a table littered with wires and disks and cells, and faced the row of rounded wooden blocks which were adorned with such various patterns of ornamental whiskers as the "Piccadilly Weeper" (No. 2), the "Burnside," the "Mutton-chop," the "Galway," the "Chin Curtain" (full size), the "Chest-warmer," and the "Populists' Delight."

I confess that my hand trembled with tense expectancy as I began to operate the electric

keys. Then the bellows began to heave and stir and the false whiskers were violently agitated, one set after another. Of course I could hear no resultant sounds from the vibrations thus set in motion, and I was delighted when Wilkins smothered an amazed oath while his rugged face was a study of novel emotions. There had come to his ears a succession of musical sounds unlike anything he had ever heard. He informed me that one reminded him of a violin; another sounded like the lingering sweetness of a twanged harp-string; while a third suggested a violoncello. Mingled with these were incredibly high-pitched and piping notes that soared far above any octaves known to human instruments. There were discords, of course, because I had not progressed as far as trying to tune these experimental whiskers.

I asked Wilkins to move one of the dummies aside and step in its place. I was wild with eagerness to try a living subject. Leaving one set of bellows pumping at full blast, I rushed to snatch up the receivers. The stiff

34]



“Wilkins smothered an amazed oath, while his rugged face was a study of novel emotions.”

J. Archibald McKackney

breeze fanned the noble beard of Wilkins and spread it out like a crimson panel. After listening for several minutes, I dropped the instruments and could not help shouting:

"Hurrah, I was right. *No more false whiskers.* Oh, the mellow richness of your tone, Wilkins. *Never, never trim your whiskers without my supervision.* After lunch we must discuss the plans for assembling an *orchestra* with a human key-board. I will spare no expense to find the needed assortment of whiskers."

As we went down stairs I was pleased to hear Wilkins humming behind me:

"As long as there's harvests of whiskers to grow,
We shall have music wherever we go."

It was late that night before I was able to outline the final instructions which should send my assistant forth on the most difficult mission of our checkered career together. He was not appalled in the least, however, and I had reason for renewed gratitude that so

36]

The Pursuit of the Hirsute Orchestra

resourceful and dauntless a companion as Wilkins had been granted me in the pursuit of my hobby. It was Wilkins who had obtained the portrait of the Insane Cossack with the Pink Whiskers after a perilous journey across Siberia, and that splendid trophy in its massive gilt frame hung facing him as we chatted in my library. It was in itself an inspiration and a reminder.

On the table were strewn my sketches and diagrams that indicated the various styles of whiskers needed to perfect the musical scale which I had resolved to assemble as soon as possible. They were grouped according to the pitch required, and carefully numbered and described. He could not go far wrong with these charts. He was to go out into the highways and hedges and find twenty-two men—no more, no less, to equip me with a range of three octaves for my Hirsute Orchestra. They would be offered handsome salaries to visit me for an indefinite period, and already I had given orders to have the billiard room and annex made into comfortable dormi-

J. Archibald McKackney

tories with a private dining-room. These guests were to be carefully selected as per the diagrams furnished Wilkins, and I explained to him:

“Each of these species of whiskers will give forth a different note when properly tuned and all you will have to do is to consult your directions. For example, here is Face Number Six—Close Cropped Sideboards (see page 118 of the illustrated catalogue of my collection), or Face Number Nine—Crisp, Pointed Vandyke, such as young doctors affect. If my recent experiments with the tuning forks have not misled me, this latter type of whisker should develop a clear and bell-like Middle C.”

Wilkins ventured to object:

“But I can’t tell whether they’ll be melojious. Supposing I happen to ship you a shockin’ consignment of discords.”

He also inquired why he should not be allowed to pick up “a bunch of the hairiest, whiskerest Johnnies he could find and let Mr. McKackney trim, clip and tune them to suit.”

The Pursuit of the Hirsute Orchestra

I explained with some slight impatience that I could not think of waiting for such whiskers as these to season and gain timbre—that a beard is like a violin, and needs age to give it tone. Rather sharply I ordered Wilkins to be sure to send me no whiskers that had been worn for less than three years.

I left him sitting by the library fire with his head in his hands studying his charts. The prospect of asking perfect strangers for the use of their whiskers seemed to disturb him now that he was on the eve of setting out in chase. But I knew that no difficulties could make him flinch once he was fairly on the trail of a coveted whisker.

My estate is remote from populous towns, and Wilkins had decided to head for Boston as the most promising field for his quarry. From his detailed reports I later learned that upon reaching that city he laid his course for the wharves and sailors' boarding-houses where he was most likely to run across old friends. This was a wise choice also for technical reasons, because I afterwards discovered

J. Archibald McKackney

that the whiskers of the seafaring members of the orchestra surpassed the others in musical qualities. I explained this on the ground that they had been exposed to strong winds and rain and sun until they were toned and seasoned to an uncommon degree—but I am wandering from my story.

Wilkins' first capture, it seems, was made as he was nearing a saloon where, in other days, he had consorted with the sailormen of Boston. Sighting an old shipmate, Peter O'Dwyer by name, my assistant was delighted to note that he had grown a set of whiskers "that would caulk a ship's yawl." Consulting his chart Wilkins saw at once that the whiskers looked very much like "Number Thirteen (Middle Octave), medium length, square cut, bushy growth."

He overhauled O'Dwyer and over a table in the back room of the tavern renewed a briny friendship. Wilkins began to glimpse the troubles that threatened to beset him when O'Dwyer was moved to ask:

"You're lookin' at me kind of cock-

The Pursuit of the Hirsute Orchestra

eyed and queer, Hank. Don't my face fit me?"

Wilkins unfolded his bulky bundle of documents and jabbing one sheet with his stubby forefinger exclaimed:

"No offense meant, Pete, but I want your whiskers. There's a reward out for a man that can match these specifications. Tell me first, how long have you worn them?"

He was assured that the O'Dwyer whiskers had sprouted four years back, or just after these two had parted in Shanghai. Wilkins came at once to the point and told him:

"Forty dollars a month and keep you like a prince. A job right out of a fairy story—that's what I offer you. And I'll give you a juicy advance the minute you sign articles."

Mr. O'Dwyer narrowly eyed his friend, and was unfeeling enough to reply:

"I'm plannin' to ship aboard a bark tomorrow, and you'd better come along with me. Booze always did give you singular visions. Did you dream you'd started a mat-

J. Archibald McKackney

tress factory and wanted my whiskers for stuffing? ”

Wilkins saw that it would only alarm his shipmate to enlarge upon the musical values of whiskers and tactfully based his persuasions upon a show of cash. Still mystified, but confiding in the oft-proven friendship of Wilkins, able seaman O'Dwyer at length declared that he was ready to follow him until the surface of Hades became solidly congealed, or words to that effect. As they walked toward the water front a salty breeze swept up from the harbor and fairly whistled through the notable beards of these two seafarers. Wilkins halted in his tracks and cocked his head as if eagerly listening. O'Dwyer stared at him with gloomy misgivings as if his suspicions were trooping back, and muttered something about “having known ’em to hear voices in the early stages.”

As Wilkins tells it, he felt himself blush up to the eyes as he came to himself with a start and thought aloud:

“I just couldn't help listening. But of
42]

The Pursuit of the Hirsute Orchestra

course my tones was invisible to the naked ear."

After putting O'Dwyer aboard a train to be shipped to me as the first "note" harvested, Wilkins set out after additional fragments of stray harmony. Among the several prizes captured later in the day was the cook of a coasting schooner who proved to be a treasure indeed. When sighted he was leaning against his galley airily twisting the needle-like ends of a rat-tailed mustache, while a slim goatee jutted from his chin like the point of a marlin spike. Wilkins' observations showed his quick grasp of the technique of his arduous mission.

"I could see that he belonged with the rest of my sweet singers," he explained to me, "for them little wind-cutters was keyed way up for the piccolo flute. And that goatee added to them cunning mustachioes had ought to make a noise like pickin' three strings of a guitar at once."

The cook was a Portuguese madly in love with a girl in New Bedford and the offer of

J. Archibald McKackney

a situation ashore made him desert his pots and pans with cries of joy. Gaining assurance from these early successes Wilkins left the water front for more conventional regions and was routed in confusion for the first time in his dashing career. While crossing the Common there approached him a slim and very erect gentleman with a pompous dignity of bearing. He carried a bundle of books under one arm, and seemed absorbed in weighty reflections. Wilkins appraised him as a person of intellectual distinction and thrilled with pleasure as he stared at the trim, brown "vandyke" which appeared to have been tended with scrupulous care. In a letter to me Wilkins wrote:

"I wished you had given me a tuning fork to try them out, Commodore, but this high-browed party struck me as a perfect specimen of Number Five and properly sound and seasoned. I thought I'd just put it to him as man to man. So I braced up to him with a most respectful apology, and tried to tell him that as I felt sure that he would be willing to
44]



“Airily twisting the needle-like ends of a rat-tailed mustache.”

J. Archibald McKackney

help along the cause of Acoustics and Harmony, I'd like to borrow his whiskers, he to go along with them of course. I asked him to spare me only a few minutes' conversation, and promised to return him and his whiskers in good order."

Condensing Mr. Wilkins' narrative, it appears that the stranger fled with panicky strides, and cried out and wildly beckoned to the first policeman he saw. Wilkins stood his ground until the policeman made for him and then he dove like a frightened rabbit into the nearest subway entrance. He was followed aboard the train by a smartly dressed young man with a twinkling eye who sat down by his side and remarked:

"I beg your pardon, but I simply can't help asking what you said to Professor R. Xerxes Peabody. He is my uncle, you know, and I never saw him rattled before. Upon my word, it was like watching a glacier blow up."

Wilkins was worried and upset, but the young man's friendly air soon won his confi-

The Pursuit of the Hirsute Orchestra

dence, and at length he explained the purpose of his mission. The stranger laughed so long and loud that Wilkins began to resent the ill-timed levity. Then the young man explained that Boston was immensely proud of Professor R. Xerxes Peabody as *its most cultured citizen*, and that never in his life had he spoken to a human being without an introduction. The idea of asking him for "the loan of his whiskers" struck the cheerful nephew as such an absolutely incredible event that he fairly begged Wilkins to "fall off at the next station and have a drink" in celebration. Wilkins was persuaded to follow his acquaintance, and a little later he related the morning's adventures. I am sure that as the listener studied the candid features and keen eyes of Wilkins he must have viewed him with growing seriousness, for he finally exclaimed with much emphasis:

"You aren't in the least bit dippy, Mr. Wilkins. It is gorgeous, every bit of it. And you simply must let me in on this. I am a musician myself in an amateurish way. And I am

J. Archibald McKackney.

dying to meet Mr. J. Archibald McKackney, whom I know by reputation of course for his famous Whisker Collections."

The conscientious Wilkins protested that his young acquaintance was ineligible because his face was as smooth as a hard-boiled egg, and called him a "fiddle without any strings." But this Mr. Arthur Harrison Colby was a perisistent youth and he argued with much spirit that while Mr. Wilkins was able to handle seafaring folk, he had already run out of this web-footed material and was invading new territory in which he was apt to "find seventeen kinds of trouble." He quoted Professor Peabody as an example of the perils that confronted the musical pilgrim, and wound up with this proposition:

"Now, I can guarantee to take care of a dozen numbers on your chart among my own acquaintances if you will ring me in as assistant on the harmonious round-up."

Wilkins thought it over and finally wired me the circumstances with a request for my O.K. I was glad to send my approval and

48]

The Pursuit of the Hirsute Orchestra

next day received a note from Mr. Colby in which he said:

“I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your confidence in me. I have had a very expensive musical education and I realize the importance of your undertaking. I promise on my honor to spare no pains to help Mr. Wilkins assemble the most harmonious collection of whiskers that ever sung together like the morning stars.”

Mr. Colby was as good as his word. Three days later Wilkins found him waiting in the hotel lobby. With him were no fewer than a dozen mustached and bearded strangers. Most of them were fashionably dressed, although four or five of these recruits looked badly battered and seedy. Before Wilkins could shout a greeting, this admirable young Colby waved his bamboo cane as if it had been a baton, and his followers rose as one man, and bowed with great dignity. They were presented by their leader as “pretty near two full Octaves, shy one corking fine note, which got lost in the shuffle. He was a merry

J. Archibald McKackney

wag, whom we plucked from the Salvation Army bread line. On the way hither he sprinted for a weighing machine, explaining that before taking a musical engagement he wanted to try his scales."

Wilkins, of course, carefully inspected the company, compared their individual whisker growths with his charts and checked them off one by one. The results were so gratifying that he asked Mr. Colby to "steer the whole symphony into the bar and wet its pipes." Presently the Salvation Army jester drifted in, and Wilkins was able to tell Mr. Colby that nineteen of the twenty-two musical notes had been secured. The remaining three, however, were the "rarest whiskers that grew in these latitudes," according to the experienced Wilkins, and he decided to send Mr. Colby ahead with his "Octaves" for speedy delivery. He himself would stay behind and endeavor to run down the missing notes. Mr. Colby explained that several of his followers were personal friends of his who had been selected from the club windows of Boston.

50]

The Pursuit of the Hirsute Orchestra

"They will be missed, because they were distinctly decorative," he added.

From the end of the bar there came the subdued harmony of an impromptu quartet singing:

"There's music in the Hair-r-r."

Wilkins opined that it was time to move, and Mr. Colby promised to deliver his melodious hirelings at their destination in ship-shape order. I will say for Mr. Colby that he did deliver his consignment intact, but their arrival at my place was unpleasantly spectacular. From the railroad station they marched into my grounds in column of twos with half the village at their heels. Mr. Colby's Harvard friends had festooned their whiskers with bows of crimson ribbon and at frequent intervals they shouted a stentorian cheer which wound up with:

"Whiz-z-z, Whee-e, Bing Boom Ah-h.
We're the Æol-i-an Orchestra-a."

J. Archibald McKackney

I succeeded in quieting this disturbance and showed these fortissimo pilgrims to their quarters in the annex. No sooner were they off my hands than Captain Jonathan Rust was setting the dormitory by the ears. He was an old sea-dog and a confounded nuisance, and I had reason to wish that I might strangle him in his baritone whiskers. First he took offense at the harmless Portuguese sea cook and demanded that he be removed to other quarters. The old curmudgeon made a social issue of eating at the same table with a man whom he would feel at liberty to kick the length of a deck, and whittled out several wooden belaying pins which he hurled at the head of the panicky Portuguese. Then he insisted that the company should be divided into two watches for the sake of discipline. A musical crank argued that the natural division was into the three Octaves, and these two quarreled night and day. Some of the others took sides, and I was in mortal fear that they would fall to pulling each other's whiskers and so wreck their tonal values.

The Pursuit of the Hirsute Orchestra

On the top of these trials, the able seaman, Peter O'Dwyer, persisted in making fish-nets for diversion. Of course he had to upset a bucket of tar in his whiskers, and Heaven only knew whether I could get him cleaned up in time for the first rehearsal. When Mr. Colby and his friends were not playing golf, they started a fresh row among old Rust, the musical crank, and the Portuguese cook, and egged them on with Harvard cheers. I breathed a prayer of fervent thanksgiving when Wilkins wired that he was en route with the twenty-second prize in tow. This musical fragment proved to be an Irish stevedore with a coy and peerless fringe sprouting from beneath his smooth-shaven chin. I was so glad to see Wilkins that I included this Mr. O'Hara in my effusive greeting at the station. The old gentleman was ill at ease and backed away from me as he croaked:

"Your fifty dollars is in me pants, and I'd go half way to Hell for twice as much as that. But I'll be ready to lep through a windy if you do begin talkin' to yourself and makin'

J. Archibald McKackney

faces at me. Mister Wilkins here says he will give me a job on the high C's. I sailed thim when a lad, but they was niver like this."

Mr. O'Hara was cheered to find several salt-water comrades in the dormitory and the forceful presence of Wilkins soon removed the discords from what he called my "human anthems." In the evening I summoned my able assistant to the library and congratulated him upon his brilliantly successful pilgrimage. My hasty survey of the *tout ensemble* led me to believe that the material for my unique Hirsute Orchestra was ready to be classified and tuned. Wilkins reported that Captain Rust had suddenly become nervous about the danger of fire among the luxuriant growths of whiskers gathered in the dormitory and had tried to place an embargo on smoking. I ordered Wilkins to equip the old man with a dozen hand grenades and a chemical extinguisher and to appoint him chief of the Fire Department, and then I took up the more important subject of assembling the orchestra in my laboratory for preliminary practice.

The Pursuit of the Hirsute Orchestra

“Have the full three octaves here at ten o'clock to-morrow morning, Wilkins,” I said in parting. “*You and I are on the eve of a marvelous revelation.*”

“All we need is a fair wind, sir,” solemnly spoke the faithful fellow from the doorway.



**THE TRAGEDY OF
THE PEASANT'S REVENGE**

CHAPTER III

THE TRAGEDY OF THE PEASANT'S REVENGE

WHEN the twenty-two members of the Hirsute Orchestra filed into my library on the morning named for the first rehearsal, I surveyed their varied assortment of whiskers with a good deal of pride and satisfaction. It had been no easy task to find and assemble this animated keyboard with which I proposed to test my new theory of musical vibration. But before attempting to extract harmony from their whiskers I had to contend with annoying discords of individual temperament, for my assistant, Hank Wilkins, had selected these gentlemen for their whiskers alone. Here on the eve of the first rehearsal old Captain Rust showed a quarrelsome mood. He had been picked up on the Boston water front because his snowy and

J. Archibald McKackney

majestic beard promised to supply a musical note of rare power and resonance, and I had been very patient with his infirmities of temper. But as he entered the library at the head of the three octaves, he bellowed at me in a stormy voice:

“I ain’t going to be treated in this ridiculous fashion. I’ll take my whiskers and go home. I didn’t expect to be herded with a passel of looneytics and used as a gosh-whanged Æolian harp.”

My most tactful efforts finally subdued him, and I mention the incident only to show the kind of trials I had to contend with at this time. As simply as possible I explained to the company the theory of sound vibration and the application of these proven facts to the Human Whisker. They listened with respectful interest, although their eyes could not help wandering to study the long lines of framed photographs and paintings on my walls, which exhibited the choicest specimens of my unique collection of whiskers, wild and tame.

At length I led them upstairs, and after
60]

The Tragedy of the Peasant's Revenge

me trooped Boston clubmen, deep-water skipper, sea-cook, physician, artist and lawyer, all of them eager to know more about the reason for my interest in them. I ushered them into my "work-shop," and directed them to be seated at random on three rows of chairs which were arranged on a platform at one end of the spacious room. They stared with amazement at the seeming chaos of intricate machinery that filled the place and I hastened to explain:

"We will set to work, gentlemen, according to my tentative diagrams of the respective tonal qualities of your whiskers. Captain Rust is placed at the lowest note of the scale to begin with."

The old gentleman rebelled at being put lower in the scale than the Portuguese sea-cook and swore that he outranked the "putty-faced son of a tea-kettle." The more intelligent members of the orchestra grasped the fact, however, that the longer and more luxuriant the whisker the lower must be the pitch of the resultant musical note, and that I had

J. Archibald McKackney

mastered the principle of the Æolian harp in a novel and startling manner. One by one the "notes" of this singular scale were given their proper positions according to my carefully prepared diagrams. It was more or less guesswork until I could begin to tune these picturesque and delicate vibratory media.

At last I was ready to seat myself in front of the electric switch board which operated the automatic series of bellows, and I applied to my ears the receivers of the microphone batteries. Wilkins, my assistant, had fastened the head of each bewhiskered gentleman in a cushioned clamp and adjusted a polished sound reflector just behind him. I have been accused of lacking a sense of humor, and I confess I could see no cause for the suppressed hilarity which seemed to be shaking Wilkins to his foundations. The aspect of these solemn rows of strangers pinned in position like so many luxuriant botanical specimens was of course odd and unusual. From the pained expressions of their features I judged that they expected me to electrocute them to a man. But
62]

The Tragedy of the Peasant's Revenge

my trained artistic eye was busy with admiring the beautiful regularity with which the serried whiskers grew shorter and shorter as they ascended the scale of three octaves.

At length I pressed a key and my fingers were tremulous with excitement. The bellows directly in front of old Captain Rust drove a swift blast of air on his face and his beard played to and fro like a miniature cascade. I waited an instant and again turned on the air current. The bellows next in line responded to an electric impulse and the flowing "Dundrearys" of the Salvation Army derelict wagged perceptibly. I turned to my tuning forks and almost stopped breathing. I had heard the first note struck from the vibrations of Captain Rust's magnificent beard and now I found that the next ascending note was no more than a quarter of a tone off the key. I realized that my fondest dreams were coming true, and my emotions were beyond words.

Step by step my marvelous mechanism stirred the sensitive vibratory impulses of this human scale into sounds too fine to be heard

by the human ear. Ah, but they were rich and enjoyable! Up, up the scale I tried each note until at last the needle-like mustaches and spiked goatee of the Portuguese sea-cook were trilling a faint, sweet chord, yes, a genuine chord of three notes, not quite in key, but magnificently promising. I was so carried away with joy and excitement that I played furiously up and down the scale, oblivious to the false notes and discords, now caressing the harmonious whiskers with a *pianissimo* breeze, again fetching great booming notes from the beard of Captain Rust with cyclonic *fortissimo* gusts.

My instruments were of course eager to hear for themselves, and one by one I allowed them to use the microphone receivers and listen to the music of each other's whiskers. At last I had to tear them away from this fascinating diversion, and announced that the tuning process would begin at three o'clock in the afternoon.

Wilkins had already summoned a skilled barber from Boston, with instructions to bring

The Tragedy of the Peasant's Revenge

his complete outfit of shears. I was fidgeting with anxiety until the orchestra had reassembled. As soon as affairs were in readiness I instructed the phlegmatic German barber as follows:

“You must be sure to do exactly as I tell you. When I am prepared to test the first note (that old gentleman on the lower right), you are to trim him as directed. Be sure to preserve the most perfect symmetry. If you cut on one side, the other must match it to a hair's breadth or there will be discord.”

The barber was a person of discretion and made no comment beyond a muttered, “Mein Gott, vat it is?” He wore a beard of Teutonic cut over which I made him slip a small silk bag lest it might be set vibrating with inharmonious effect. As soon as the knight of the shears knelt beside Captain Rust, I found the pitch of the note with a tuning fork, while I told the barber:

“Clip a little off the left side. Now the same off the right. Ah, that is better. It is still a shade too low. Now a fraction off

the bottom. The tone is almost perfect. Clip the merest strand from under his chin. There, he is absolutely in tune."

With deft shears the bewildered barber altered, curtailed and harmonized the contrasting types of whiskers that were displayed along the ornate sequence of three octaves. By shortening the vibratory media the tones were easily raised, but when I found three sets of whiskers pitched too low, I was compelled to ask their owners to withdraw from rehearsals until the natural process of growth should lower their pitch.

When I dismissed the orchestra for the day I cautioned them to keep away from damp places lest the myriads of delicate strings of their "Æolians" should shrink and get out of tune. Wilkins suggested advising them to use moth powder freely, but I think the fellow was jesting.

I sent for him that evening and confided my cherished purpose. In another fortnight I hoped to be ready to play simple airs in the key of C Natural on the McKackney Hirsute
66]



“Now a fraction off the bottom. The tone is almost perfect.”

J. Archibald McKackney

Orchestra. Then I intended to invite to a private concert or exhibition a score of the leading musicians and scientists of the East, including the head of the Musical Department of Harvard University. My bold crusade in behalf of the Human Whisker as a field for Nature study¹ had won me some small reputation in the intellectual world, and I had reason to believe that my invitation would be respectfully entertained.

The rehearsals were conducted day and night, and so far advanced were my plans three days before the date of the concert that I had the superb pleasure of listening to a programme of no less than eight popular airs played with notable beauty of expression. I had become like a man in a dream, and had lost all interest in other affairs. I therefore paid little attention to Hank Wilkins when he read me the following cablegram from Berlin:

“Bearded peasant shipped per instructions. Due arrive steamer *Bremen* nineteenth.

“STEINBACH.”

¹ See Appendix A.

The Tragedy of the Peasant's Revenge

"Bearded peasant?" I echoed blankly. "What the deuce is that. Some curio my Berlin agent has sent me on approval? Do you know anything about it, Wilkins?"

"Yes, sir," he replied. "Don't you recall Steinbach's sending you word that he had found a peasant near Hanover with a beard six feet four and a half inches long, which he braided and wore in three half-hitches around his neck? You wanted to add him to your collection, sir, and we were on the point of starting for Germany to look him over when you ran afoul of your musical vibration theory and chucked everything else in the discard."

Then I remembered the bearded peasant. I had cabled Steinbach to ship him to me and to ask Lloyds to insure his whiskers for the voyage. But I had no time to bother with my collections now, for the concert was only two days away. I asked Wilkins to run down to New York and fetch the trophy home and find quarters for him. In another week I could study and photograph him at my leisure. Then I dismissed this rare importation from

J. Archibald McKackney



“ Wilkins brought the hairy exile home with him.”

my mind and plunged with furious energy into the final series of rehearsals.

Wilkins met the steamer as directed and brought the hairy exile home with him, while
70]

The Tragedy of the Peasant's Revenge

curious crowds followed them to my gates. I did not clap eyes on him at the time, and the incidents leading up to the horrible tragedy perpetrated by this base wretch came to my knowledge after the event. The bearded one, Hans Bumphauser by name, turned out to be a vain and stupid yokel who had been vastly puffed up by the invitation of the "great American nobleman." His whiskered eminence had won him a certain notoriety in his own village and he had come to conquer new and glittering worlds. He had expected to be received by me in person and the ends of his beard were bound with gaudy fillets of tinsel by way of a festal toilet. It vexed and disgruntled him to find that the "nobleman" was too busy to notice him.

The humiliated *object de art* sent numerous messages to the mansion demanding an audience with me, between whiles combing and braiding his beard with praiseworthy diligence and holding himself in readiness for the summons that never came. I had forbidden the household servants to annoy me with outside

J. Archibald McKackney

matters, and I had forgotten the very existence of Hans Bumphauser, the pride of Eistelberg. Would to Heaven I had given him the finest suite in my mansion and dined him at my right hand!

It seems that in his gloomy excursions over the estate the bearded peasant had noticed the unusual number of whiskered gentlemen who seemed to be welcome guests at the mansion. He saw them going to and fro in groups and squads, and the sensational beard of Hank Wilkins also helped to confirm the black suspicions of Hans Bumphauser that these strangers had crowded him out of favor with the Lord of the Manor. He was even overheard to mutter, "Gott in Himmel, are these second-rate whiskers to make me forgotten already?" But no importance was attached to this ominous hint of what was shortly to befall.

Jealousy was flaming his grief into slow and sullen anger and he began to hunger for revenge. His thick wits could devise no way of harming the neglectful and fickle Mr. Mc-

72]

The Tragedy of the Peasant's Revenge

Kackney until in an evil moment he happened to meet my orchestral barber in the village tavern. To his fellow-countryman the peasant unfolded his tale of deception and heart-ache. They lingered over many glasses of beer and the barber became criminally confidential. He began to brag of his own importance in my household and hinted that upon his skill and fidelity hinged the success of the most important undertaking of my life.

The bearded one listened with more interest and fairly pricked up his ears when the barber became loquacious enough to tell him, "Every day I must trim the whiskers of the twenty-two visiting gentlemen exactly just so or there will be ten thousand devils to pay."

Hans Bumphauser objected that it was a sin to trim the whiskers at all, and that no sane man would ever lay hand upon a whisker except in kindness. But the barber sighed:

"Ach, but it is the music. I have not heard the wonderful music, but I have seen it every day."

J. Archibald McKackney

Bumphauser wanted to know what the music had to do with a barber, and the latter was rash enough to say:

"It is the grand concert to-morrow, stupid. But if I do not do my duty right, the concert will be ruined. And Herr von McKackney will die of a broken heart."

Of course the misguided peasant was keenly interested by this time, and he had heard enough to make him thirst for more information. The German farm-hand with whom he lodged had been previously summoned to the music-room to help move some heavy machinery, and he had watched the barber at work with his tuning. By persistent questioning Hans Bumphauser began to piece together a working theory of revenge. In short, his conclusion must have been that if in some way he could tamper with the whiskers of the twenty-two guests he would deal a mortal blow at the hated Herr von McKackney.

Ignorant of any menacing danger I was preparing to welcome the distinguished company of scientists and musicians. They were
74]

The Tragedy of the Peasant's Revenge

to arrive for dinner Saturday night. In the evening I planned to deliver a lecture to pave the way for the demonstration, and on Sunday morning they would listen to the first concert of the Hirsute Orchestra. Fearing to expose myself to baseless ridicule I had so worded my invitations that my guests should not learn the nature of my discovery until I had a chance to explain it on scientific grounds.

As was to be expected, they came in mingled moods of doubt and curiosity, but I flatter myself that before the dinner was over they had begun to consider the journey well worth while. After coffee and cigars in the library I requested their attention and began to read from a roll of manuscript. The savants were interested from the start. The originality of my views made them breathless, but I took them step by step from one unassailable premise to an equally sound conclusion. The first mention of "Whiskers" evoked a ripple of levity, but this was soon smothered in hearty applause as I began to describe the experi-

J. Archibald McKackney

ments which had led to the assembling of the Hirsute Orchestra. Then I laid my manuscript aside and announced in ringing tones:

"You may think me a madman, gentlemen, but to-morrow morning you shall listen to the music which I have tried to describe. You shall hear for yourselves and be convinced. You have been very patient, and your reward shall be in proportion. Gentlemen, the Hirsute Orchestra is an accomplished fact and——"

There was a sound of clattering footsteps in the hall. I paused and waited, and an instant later Hank Wilkins burst into the library like a tornado. He was breathless from running, and his eyes were fairly popping from his head. I had never seen him so agitated and I knew that he bore some dreadful tidings. Even after years my memory is stamped with the words which he hoarsely stammered:

"The Hirsute Orchestra is busted all to Hell, Commodore. There's no repairin' damages. It's a total wreck."

The guests rose in confusion while I swayed

76]

The Tragedy of the Peasant's Revenge

in my tracks and could only murmur in a far-away voice that I scarcely recognized as my own:

"Explain yourself, Wilkins. For Heaven's sake, pull yourself together. I—I—don't understand."

My devoted assistant snatched a decanter from a table and hurried to my side as he cried:

"Throw in a stiff one, sir. You'll need it. It was the prize Dutchman, sir, the Bump-hauser lad, that came by cable. He was sore about something and he ran amuck with a big pair of scissors—just now—in the dormitory. Some of the Æolians had turned in early and was asleep. He hacked at their whiskers right and left. The devastation was appalling. Great handfuls chopped out of 'em. Then he broke into the smoking room. Four of the priceless Middle Octaves were playing poker. Before they could get steerage way the whiskers of two of 'em was in ghastly ruins."

I fell into an armchair and gasped for air. I could not find speech, and while the company



“He was sore about something and ran amuck with a big pair of scissors.”

The Tragedy of the Peasant's Revenge

stood as if rooted to the floor Wilkins concluded:

"And while I was running to the scene I met old man Rust and Peter O'Dwyer staggerin' home from the village. Their whiskers had gone by the board, decks swept as clean as the back of my hand, sir. The Bumphauser pirate had loaded them with booze and gashed their whiskers off in the back room of the tavern. There ain't a whole Octave left, and the *Hirsute Orchestra* is fit for nothing but the junk-shop."

"Did you capture the infernal scoundrel?" I finally managed to gasp.

"He's bound and gagged in the stable, sir, and I left orders to hang him in his own whiskers if he moved an eyelash."

With sympathetic accord my guests stole into the dining room, and as soon as possible I begged them to excuse me for the night. As I fairly tottered into the hall, leaning on the arms of my faithful Wilkins I said to him:

"I want to forget it all for a while. It is the most crushing blow of my long life. We

J. Archibald McKackney

must go away from here at once. Engage passage on the next steamer bound for Europe. Thank Heaven, Wilkins, your own peerless Titian beard was spared."

THE EPISODE OF
THE SENTIMENTAL ANARCHIST

CHAPTER IV

THE EPISODE OF THE SENTIMENTAL ANARCHIST

THE Atlantic liner *Hoch Der Kaiser* was two days out from New York when my indefatigable assistant, Hank Wilkins, appeared in the smoking-room door and beckoned to me to join him on deck. I shook my head in a negative manner, for I was playing poker with several American trust magnates who had shown themselves to be a jovial company of philanthropists and most congenial companions. After gaining control of most of the food supply and transportation systems of their own country they were en route for Europe to attempt the formation of world-wide monopolies in pickles, beer, coffins, flour and so on.

Presently Wilkins returned to the doorway and beckoned with more emphasis than before.

J. Archibald McKackney

He was fidgeting with impatience and knowing that he would not venture to call me for a trifling matter I left the game and followed him on deck. He begged my pardon and said:

"You might regret it if I didn't tell you at once, sir. But you have been after it for three years, and I never saw a finer——"

"Not the Full-blooming Aurora pattern?" I gasped with a flash of intuition. "You don't mean that you have discovered a specimen of the rarest varieties of the Human Whisker?"

"I haven't examined them close," he replied, "but it looks that way, sir. You recall that imperfect imitation you have at home, sir—the Hall Caine portrait in the billiard room? Well, *that* looks like a deck swab beside what I've found."

I was overjoyed and declared that I must see it at once. Wilkins chuckled with pleasure at my eagerness and as he led me aft he explained that the whiskers belonged to a second-cabin passenger, who looked like a Rus-

84]

Episode of the Sentimental Anarchist

sian. Wilkins had tried in vain to scrape his acquaintance, for the fellow seemed so nervous and wild-eyed that he fled from all overtures. In fact, so Wilkins informed me, "he flocked by himself as if he was afraid of something." We lingered at the rail that barred the passage to the second cabin, and scanned the long row of steamer chairs. Wilkins was confident that the Russian would take a turn on deck before dinner, and said that when he walked it was with a head-long gait and incoherent mutterings to himself.

A little later a man of singular appearance emerged from the deck house aft and crossing to the vessel's side stood glaring at the interminable carpet of blue water. His figure was slender and slouching, his attire well cared for but shabby, and that which made his otherwise commonplace aspect conspicuous was the framing of his features. Beard, whiskers, mustache, there were no lines of demarcation. The luxuriant and rayonnant growth encircled and fairly obscured his lineaments. It was almost as if he wore a mask, but *such*

J. Archibald McKackney

a mask. As the sunset glow became enmeshed in this peerless decoration, its forest of tendrils was illumined and the man's face loomed in a kind of golden aurora.

I silently shook the hand of Wilkins and told him that if Hall Caine could behold this peerless specimen he would shave for very humiliation. There was only one thing to do. I must have the Russian's portrait painted by the finest artist in Europe.

"We'll land him if we can get near enough to put salt on his whiskers," was Wilkins gloomy comment. "He's a d——n shy bird."

I told Wilkins that he simply must scrape some kind of an acquaintance in order to pave the way for me. If necessary, I would have his berth shifted to the second cabin. He was to stick to the Full-blooming Aurora by night and day. The man could not run away on shipboard, and Wilkins had never failed me. Late that night he reported that the coveted stranger had suddenly and violently fallen in love with a pretty English girl in the second

86]

Episode of the Sentimental Anarchist



“The coveted stranger had suddenly and violently fallen in love.”

cabin, and forsaking his eccentric solitude, had been in the charmer's company for several hours. Wilkins advanced the theory that this sentimental attack might have been responsible for his singular actions; that while talking to himself and waving his arms he had been trying to screw his courage up to the

point of declaring his passion. Wilkins had not talked to him, but explained:

"I made a date with the girl to play shuffleboard in the morning. I can make easier sailing with the petticoats, sir."

Mr. Hank Wilkins of the Titian beard had a way with him and at noon next day he was snugly tucked in a steamer chair by the side of the rosy English girl. He had artfully lured her to a secluded corner where they were screened from observation behind a huge ventilator. His attractive companion seemed to welcome this isolation, and she was frank enough to say after listening to the conversation of the versatile Wilkins:

"It's a relief to get away from that dotty person with the blond fringes, I'm sure. Fawncy, he flopped down on his knees to me this morning, right on deck. He almost frightens me."

Wilkins gallantly assured her that this kind of evidence would convince any jury of the Russian's sanity, but she went on to say:

Episode of the Sentimental Anarchist

"He talks very odd and violent most of the time. And he keeps on hinting about some awful disaster that is almost due to happen."

Wilkins expressed the fervent hope that the disaster might not involve his whiskers, and the girl became more confidential:

"When he spoke to me lawst night I felt like screamin'. But I didn't dare not to be nice to him, you know. He is an anarchist by trade. He told me so. Fawncy me an anarchist's bride. And he proposed to me twice this morning. I'm sure he has something dreadful on his mind. He passed me to-day muttering, '*too late, too late. My God, I never dreamed—*' I missed the rest of it, but it was right out of a melodrama."

Just then the anarchist stepped from beyond the ventilator and shot a murderous glance at Wilkins as he slouched past. Wilkins swore to me that he could hear the man's teeth grinding like a coffee mill and that his pockets were bulging with bombs destined to

J. Archibald McKackney

be hurled at his dashing rival. When these reports were conveyed to me I perceived that the demon of jealousy had stepped in to thwart any plans that Wilkins might have for capturing the Full-blooming Aurora trophy. I decided to make the attempt on my own account, and deeming all weapons fair with such a prize at stake, I was ready to confess myself a brother anarchist on the instant. At the first opportunity I strolled aft with Wilkins. We leaned against the rail within ear-shot of the glowering Russian, whose tragic pose was evidently intended to impress the English girl. She was playing deck quoits with several passengers and her outlandish adorer had nothing better to do than to listen to me as I vehemently addressed Wilkins:

“Monstrous! Criminal! The predatory rich, the fat-headed princelings on tinsel thrones—in short, all human parasites ought to be obliterated. Look at that bloated group of trust kings in the smoking room. My dear sir, we are their serfs. All government is a crime. All wealth is——”

Episode of the Sentimental Anarchist

Wilkins smote the rail with his fist and burst out:

"Yes, siree. Three fingers of gun-cotton with a chaser of dynamite 'ud do the Kaiser a whole lot of good. And as for King Edward, somebody ought to jolt him clean off his perch. And them dog-robbin' trust barons aboard, why, for two cents I'd bump them off to glory myself."

The Russian had turned and was listening to this heated dialogue with open satisfaction. Wilkins found an errand forward, and left me to stare at the sea in a gloomy reverie, while the stranger was edging nearer. After a time Wilkins from afar off beheld us two desperate characters addressing each other with animated gestures. In this fashion I became an acquaintance of the Russian and learned that his name was Pebotsky. We passed most of the afternoon together. I accepted his invitation to dine with him in the second cabin. By this time he was calling me his friend.

In the evening we sat in a lonely corner on

J. Archibald McKackney

the deck, and I had totally forgotten his whiskers, *for Pebotsky was a maddened fiend in human form.* I dared not leave him until his tale was done. This shabby, wild-eyed anarchist whom I had laughed at from afar was become a hideous menace, a factor of life and death. And he had embraced me as a comrade! To such awful depths had the love of art led me!

I am sure that my ruddy cheek must have become a mottled gray before he was done with me. I know that when I started for my room my knees were trembling violently and my breathing was no more than a series of gasps. We had been talking for hours when he decided to make me his confidant. Heaven knows why he did not keep his infernal secret to himself. I surmised that he was almost insane from mental torture and could not hold in. I had lied and perjured myself to such an extent that he had accepted me as one of the blood-stained elect of all besotted anarchists. When he asked me if I valued my life I snapped my fingers and
92]

Episode of the Sentimental Anarchist

told him not a tinker's damn, and that I would gladly be blown up in sections if it were in company with a crowned head or a capitalist. In fact, I believe I swore I was thirsting for just such a chance. It was all for the sake of his whiskers, may Heaven forgive me!

To pass over this painful recollection as hastily as possible, I won the madman's implicit confidence. It seems that while ashore he had got wind of the intended sailing of Jordan and Packard and the other trust magnates aboard. As he figured it, here was the chance of the age to bag most of the arch-demons of commercial oppression at one fell swoop. Nothing like it was likely ever to come his way again. He had invented a most damnable clever infernal machine, and somehow had managed to smuggle two of them into the holds of the ship, concealed in harmless looking packages of freight.

Try to picture my emotions when Pebotsky calmly informed me that both infernal machines were timed to explode on the morrow.

J. Archibald McKackney

They would infallibly blow the *Hoch Der Kaiser* into a million pieces.

Pebotsky's own presence on board led me to think him a colossal and picturesque liar, but he snatched this hope of escape from me. He protested that he was not only anxious, but eager, to become a martyr and that the removal of six trust magnates in one operation would be such a glorious monument that it would be wicked to let the chance slip. Besides he wanted to see how his infernal machines worked. The inconceivable ass did not have an atom of common sense. Up to this period of the voyage matters had been running smoothly for Pebotsky. Then he fell in love with the pretty English girl, Miss Fletcher, and she knocked all his calculations into a cocked hat. He absolutely raved about her to me. He had come to the conclusion that she was his soul's affinity and various other volcanic tommy-rot, and therefore he did not want in the least to blow her up or be blown up himself. He told me that he was now willing to spare the trust magnates until

94]

Episode of the Sentimental Anarchist

they got ashore and then his friends would "bomb" them one at a time.

Pebotsky was fairly wild to save the ship, but he could not. *It was too late.* These two infernal machines of his had been stowed somewhere at the bottom of thousands of tons of miscellaneous cargo. He wouldn't know the boxes if he saw them. A friend of his had looked after shipping them. He was responsible only for their confounded insides. Even if the crew should be set to work to dump every package of cargo into the sea they could not have half of it out of the doomed ship in the next twenty-four hours. And the first machine had been timed to go off at noon sharp. He said that they exploded themselves by means of chronometer attachments.

I listened to this awful narrative in speechless horror while Pebotsky raved and tore his hair and tried to think of some way of saving Miss Fletcher and himself. I managed to express my surprise that he should have been so ready to blow up a thousand innocent souls to bag his trust magnates, but Pebotsky

J. Archibald McKackney

was as inconsistent as the average infatuated lover.

As soon as I had left him I determined to seek the captain of the ship. I was ready to betray Pebotsky, for it made no difference whether we all knew it or not. I could see no way out of the incredibly harrowing situation. I got as far as Wilkins' stateroom and then my strength left me. I roused him and tottered inside and collapsed on his divan. He heard me out with his unfailing *sang froid* and took it upon himself to find the captain. Wilkins could see no hope of escape unless the crew and passengers should be ordered into the boats and the ill-fated liner abandoned to her doom.

It required much argument before the officer on deck could be persuaded to waken Captain Zimmer. The commander of the *Hoch Der Kaiser* was short-tempered and irritable when he confronted Wilkins, who stood by his guns, however, until the amazing tale was done.

"Send to the second cabin and fetch me a
96]

Episode of the Sentimental Anarchist

passenger named Pebotsky," the captain roared through a speaking tube to the officer on the bridge. "If he don't come put the irons on him. Mein Gott, man, do you know vat you vas saying just now? I should lock you up as a lunatic, but I know your boss, Herr McKackney. I have been at his house in America. He is sensible, only for this whisker business of his. So we blow up twice to-morrow? Once was enough."

When the anarchist was dragged into the captain's cabin he brushed his rude-fisted escort aside and struck a heroic attitude as he shouted:

"Ha, ha! It is all true. I am glad my fat friend McKackney has betrayed me. I glory in your anguish. It is I that makes you suffer. It is the last night on earth for you and——"

"Dot is plenty from you, Pebotsky," thundered the captain. "If you don't own up quick dot you vas a crazy liar I vill have you chucked overboard."

Thereupon this devil of a fellow fairly begged the captain to throw him overboard.

J. Archibald McKackney



“Struck a heroic attitude as he shouted.”

It hastened the glorious end by only a few hours, he declared, and all he asked was a chance to say farewell to his “soul’s affinity.” The skipper was nonplussed and threatened to keep Pebotsky in irons and throw his soul’s affinity overboard unless he produced his hidden infernal machines. The anarchist flung himself at the captain’s feet and sobbed out that if there was any way to save the ship he would do his share, and explained that his own

98]

Episode of the Sentimental Anarchist

change of heart had come too late to avert the total destruction of the *Hoch Der Kaiser*.

Even that splendid old sea-dog, Captain Zimmer, was agitated and distraught. If he should take it for granted that Pebotsky was crazy and had dreamed his infernal machines, then it was not going to be pleasant waiting until noon next day to find out whether the verdict were right or wrong. Captain Zimmer ordered two seamen to lock Pebotsky in the ship's prison, and told Wilkins that he must have time to think things over. The two seamen who lugged Pebotsky from below had overheard his ravings. They told their comrades, who in turn passed the dreadful secret along to the stewards, and thence it leaked among a few of the passengers.

Before breakfast next morning the several presidents of the most powerful American trusts waited upon the captain. Their spokesman declared in a shaky voice (as overheard by Wilkins) :

"If this ship is to be blown up at noon to-day, we are prepared to buy the cargo out-

J. Archibald McKackney

right, provided it can be thrown overboard in time."

Another of the group exclaimed:

"We have subscribed a purse of a million dollars to bribe the anarchist to call it off."

A third broke in to say:

"And we will buy the ship on the spot and give you command of her. And then we will order you to desert her with the passengers and crew as quick as the Lord will let you."

Captain Zimmer set his jaw hard and told the magnates:

"It was you gentlemen that started the performance. Why didn't you stay ashore before you come aboard to make this anarchist go crazy? Now your money will buy you nothings from me. The ship is being searched, all suspicious cargo hoisted on deck, and I can do nothing more. It is unheard of, gentlemen, that a vessel in perfect order should be abandoned at sea. My men have been working in the holds since midnight. Maybe your jackpots will be raised through the skylight at noon, eh?"

100]

Episode of the Sentimental Anarchist

As the morning wore on, the excitement, confusion, and painful suspense on deck baffled description. The captain of the *Hoch Der Kaiser* had no more time for his passengers. His crew was on the edge of a panic-stricken mutiny, and the officers were ordered to shoot the first deserter from his post. Men and women fought their way to the captain's deck to plead that he take to the life-boats. Pebot-sky had been released and was in the hold in charge of a squad of seamen, his ears strained to detect the tell-tale clicking of hidden clock-work.

I had made my will before sailing, bequeathing the McKackney Whisker Collection to the American Society for the Promotion of Curious Science. Other passengers with less forethought were flocking around a lawyer in the dining saloon who was rapidly writing wills and sealing them up in bottles to be tossed overboard at the last moment.

As the time crept nearer and nearer noon, the grimy men from the engine and fire rooms began to pour on deck. They could not be

J. Archibald McKackney

kept under, and it was all the officers could do to head off their rush for the boats. The jarring thud of the screws ceased. The *Hoch Der Kaiser* rolled idly on the long swell as if waiting for the unspeakable moment.

Exactly on the stroke of noon the huge vessel shivered from stem to stern as if she had run on a reef. There was a dull, muffled sound from somewhere under the forward hatch, and the air was filled with flying fragments of timber and shattered cargo. An instant later it seemed to rain cans of corned beef, tongue and deviled ham. Then followed a torrent of potatoes, showers of them, hurled aloft with their splintered barrels, and in their descent fairly bombarding the fear-stricken and cowering passengers. I was struck on the head by a juicy missile and sent reeling to the deck, and as in a dream I heard Hank Wilkins observe with his customary heartiness:

“It’s what you might call an earthquake accompanied by violent showers of corn-beef hash.”



W. MORGAN

“It seemed to rain cans of corned beef, tongue and
deviled ham.”

J. Archibald McKackney

He assisted me forward where we peered down the devastated hatchway. A squad of seamen was already hurrying into the hold with lines of hose, the captain at their head. Before long he sent the first officer to report that no lives had been lost. A hole was blown in the ship's bottom, but her bulkheads were still intact, and there was no danger of her sinking. The force of the explosion had been broken by a thousand barrels of potatoes and several hundred tons of canned meats that must have been piled on top of the first infernal machine. The joyful passengers flocked about the trust magnates, and cheered as they singled out the respective presidents of the beef and potato monopolies.

"You have saved our lives," they chorused. "Hurrah for the trusts."

Pebotsky was led past them just then, a sailor clutching him by the ear. An expression of poignant anguish convulsed the pallid features of the anarchist. I heard him hiss between his teeth:

"I would destroy these monsters of capital,

Episode of the Sentimental Anarchist

and I have made heroes of them. Now I wish to die. But there will be yet another explosion—in one hour."

This escape from destruction had put new heart into the ship's company. With furious exertion they toiled in the afterholds, risking their lives like men with the hangman's rope around their necks. Fifteen minutes before the second explosion was scheduled to occur, a hoarse cheer rose from the open hatch abaft the first-class smoking room. It was lustily echoed on deck. Strong men, and men not so strong, burst into tears and were unashamed. Women were hysterical with joy and embraced utter strangers. Little children scampered to and fro with shrill and gladsome shouts. No one waited for a report from below. This roar of exultation could mean nothing less than the discovery of the second infernal machine.

A few minutes later, while all hands waited with incredibly painful emotions, a cargo boom slowly hoisted from the depth of the hold a heavy packing-case hastily wrapped

J. Archibald McKackney

and cushioned with pieces of burlap. It swayed skyward, and then swung to and fro *and refused to budge*. The wire cables had somehow jammed in their sheaves.

Groans burst from the paling lips of those who stood and watched the dreadful menace suspended above the deck. The donkey engine puffed and strained. The taut cables twanged like huge bow-strings, but in vain. Brave seamen ran up the mast and boom like monkeys and madly strove to release the tackle.

There was no hoisting or lowering the packing-case. The seamen dared not cut away the fastenings. It seemed impossible to avert a disaster as unlooked for as it was imminent. The frenzied onlookers fancied they could hear the inexorable ticking of the mechanism in the packing-case. Men stood as if rooted in their tracks, fascinated, hypnotized with horror. Several held their watches and shuddered as they saw the minute hands steal past *six, five, four, three*, minutes of the hour.

Then the ropes began slowly to slip through
106]

Episode of the Sentimental Anarchist

the sheaves. Inch by inch the infernal machine descended toward the vessel's rail. Twenty men rushed to be ready to cast it loose. As it swung within a few feet of the deck, a slender, slouching man broke away from his captors with a shrill cry. Before they could overtake him he had reached the side of the deck, and leaped upon the rail with arms outstretched toward the swaying packing-case. The singular abundance of his golden whiskers partly hid the expression of his face, but those who were nearest him said that he was weeping. The laboring seamen were absorbed in a frenzy of haste. They paid no heed to this strange figure on the rail. With a mighty heave they pushed the packing-case clear of the vessel's side.

I sprang forward, forgetting my own peril, for the anarchist was waving farewell to the pretty English girl with a gesture of tragic despair. I was bent upon saving the Full-blooming Aurora from the sea. But as the infernal machine surged from its fastenings, the Sentimental Anarchist leaped forward and

J. Archibald McKackney

plunged headlong, so nearly in company with his diabolical device that they made but one splash.

I glanced at my watch. It was one o'clock to the second. A huge column of water shot from the surface of the ocean and fell back in jeweled cascades. A subdued roar came from the depths and the steamer trembled. As if to testify to the genius of its creator, the second infernal machine had exploded precisely at the time appointed.

I was filled with the most profound gratitude and thanksgiving for our merciful preservation. But as I stared over the side and viewed the foaming whirlpool into which Pebotsky had vanished, I felt that there was one bitter drop in my cup. His whiskers had perished with him and I mourned the loss of the noblest specimen of the Full-blooming Aurora pattern that in all probability existed on earth.

While I tried to console myself with the reflection that there is no joy without some sorrow, the gusty wind wafted a bit of some-
108]

Episode of the Sentimental Anarchist

thing like gossamer from the upper air and left it on the deck at my feet. I picked it up. It was a tiny strand of golden hair, a fragment of the peerless whiskers of the late Pebotsky. Almost reverently I placed the souvenir in my notebook. It was all that remained of the Sentimental Anarchist.

**THE TALE OF
THE WANDERING BOOK-CASE**

The Tale of the Wandering Book-Case

so delicate and even insulting that I could only writhe in baffled helplessness.

At length the train halted at a wayside station and there seemed to be some trouble on the tracks ahead. I summoned the guard to unlock my door, and stepped on the platform to stretch my legs. A minute or so later I saw the illustrious potentate impatiently throw up his window and poke his head out to glare to and fro as if seeking the cause of our detention. His noble beard fell outside in a torrent and waggled in an imposing manner. While I was staring at it with envious eyes, the guard signaled the order to go ahead. I was about to hurry into my compartment when a startling outcry arose from the adjoining carriage. I turned and beheld a truly amazing spectacle. While his majesty was withdrawing his head from the open window the sash had dropped with great force. The end of his beard was caught and held as in a vise and almost a foot of it hung over the window-sill outside.

The helpless prisoner was roaring for

J. Archibald McKackney

assistance and beating the glass with his fists. I saw the chance of a lifetime. The train was in motion, and swinging myself on the foot-board, I whisked out my scissors, and with a lightning sweep of the arm, snipped a generous handful from the end of the captive beard. It was hideous *lese majestie*, but my ardor reckoned not with consequences. Never shall I forget the murderous wrath that flamed in the countenance of my august prey as he gnashed his teeth at me through the window pane.

It was all over in a second or two. I knew that the king's companion would stop the train if his release were not instantly effected. Tucking my trophy in an inside pocket I abandoned my luggage and ran swiftly across the platform, through the station, and into the traffic-crowded street. Leaping into an empty cab I threw a gold piece at the driver, ordered him to drive like the devil for nowhere in particular, and was borne swiftly away from the scene of my remarkable achievement.

I shall pass over the incidents of my flight



“Snipped a generous handful from the end of the captive beard.”

J. Archibald McKackney

and escape. Thanks to a lavish use of money and a frequent change of disguise I succeeded in passing the frontier, and within three days was crossing the English Channel. The European newspapers were ringing with garbled reports of the assault of an anarchist or lunatic upon the person of a certain illustrious ruler, but none of them connected the dastardly incident with the American tourist, J. Archibald McKackney.

At that time there was a keen rivalry in this field of collecting between a New York man named Pillsover and myself. He was, in fact, no more than an imitator, and had begun to seek the whiskers of celebrities through hearing of my success. He was a friend of mine, in a way, and I had often entertained him at my New England country place. After my return from abroad I asked him down to view the trophy shorn from the chin of the European ruler in the manner already described. He tried to conceal his consuming envy, but I could see that he was wretchedly unhappy. His two most notable

118]

The Tale of the Wandering Book-Case

captures were totally eclipsed. One of them had been purchased from the barber of a petty Hapsburg prince, and the other begged from an American cabinet minister.

We spent the evening among my collections in the library and when we were ready to go upstairs, I went to replace the priceless trophy in my fireproof vault. The steel doors had been closed by my secretary, however, who took it for granted that I had finished my business with it. The time lock had been set to open next morning, so that I was barred out.

I had been examining a volume of a costly edition of a standard author, and one of the books lay open on the library table. Without more ado I tucked the parchment envelope containing the royal strands of whiskers between the leaves of this book which I restored to its case, intending to look after it in the morning.

My friend, and rival, Pillsover, was compelled to take the midnight train to the city and we parted on the best of terms. Little

J. Archibald McKackney

did I dream that when next we met it would be as implacable enemies.

Early in the morning I was aroused by a telegram demanding my immediate presence in Boston on a matter of large financial importance. The news was so disturbing that the recollection of the trophy hidden in the book-case was wholly driven from my thoughts. In fact I did not recall it until my return late in the afternoon of the following day. Then I hastened to the library, withdrew the volume which I had been reading two nights before, and searched it with some small excitement.

No one but a collector can imagine my emotions when I discovered that the parchment envelope was missing. I ran through every one of the thirty odd volumes with furious haste. Tearing my hair and fairly breathless I summoned my secretary. His tidings added fresh fuel to my wrath and consternation. I should explain that this subscription edition of books, with their handsomely carved case, had been shipped to me on approval. Through a blunder of the publisher a binding

120]

The Tale of the Wandering Book-Case

slightly different from the style selected by me had been sent. I had noticed the error and intended to write about it at my leisure.

In the meantime, however, the publisher had discovered the mistake, and during my absence in Boston he had sent an agent to my house with the other set of books to replace those already in my possession. My secretary explained to me that the agent had taken the wrong edition back to New York with him, and placed the new set of books in their case in my library. Knowing that I desired to have this change made, my secretary had made no objections. I am afraid that my language was shocking, but the provocation was immense. Here was my parchment envelope, containing the gem of my hirsute collection, whisked off to Heaven knew where, by a misguided wretch of a book agent.

When I became calmer I asked if anything else had happened during my unlucky absence. I was informed that Pillsover had called on the previous day, just as the publisher's agent was driving away with the first or wrong set

J. Archibald McKackney

of books. He had recognized the agent as a salesman from Vellum & Co., and had shown considerable curiosity concerning his errand.

"I explained the circumstances," confessed my secretary, "and Mr. Pillsover asked me if you knew of the transfer of books. I told him that you had to go to Boston without a chance to attend to any business at home. Then he wanted to know whether you had left me any special instructions about the collections. I told him I had not seen you that morning. Then he spent some little time in the library, made some inquiries about the time lock of the vault, and said he was thinking of getting one like it."

A few more questions and I had fathomed the purpose of the conscienceless Pillsover. He had returned to try to secure, by trade or purchase, the Sovereign's Whisker. A collector myself, I could imagine him as passing a restless night tortured with the desire to win from me my prize. He knew where I had stowed the trophy overnight, and he was able to make a shrewd guess that it still

122]

The Tale of the Wandering Book-Case

reposed in the book. As soon as I had pumped my secretary dry, my surmise amounted to a conviction that, unknown to me, the book along with its fellows had been carted away to the publisher and that Pillsover had followed its trail in hot haste.

I perceived at once that if Pillsover could overtake the book-case, he would abstract the parchment envelope, and that I should not be able to prove his guilt. In fact, there would be no way of bringing home the theft to anybody. Pillsover had obtained the start over me, but I instantly called up the New York office of Vellum & Co. on the long distance 'phone and ordered them to hold the returned set of books until I could make a personal examination of them.

Their reply pained me beyond words. The books had been received, but there happened to be so many orders on file for this particular edition that they had been reshipped by express within an hour of their arrival. I demanded the address of the consignee, and was told that *four sets* of this edition had been

J. Archibald McKackney

sent out in the afternoon and that it was impossible to tell which of the four had been returned by me. Here was the very deuce to pay. I insisted upon having the four addresses of the consignees. They were scattered from Skowhegan, Maine, to Richmond, Virginia. The publisher tried to console me over the 'phone by adding:

"Your friend, Mr. Pillsover, called this afternoon and tried to catch the books you speak of. He seemed quite excited when I explained the circumstances of their reshipment. He made me give him the addresses of the four consignees, so we took it for granted that he was acting in your behalf."

In my mind's eye I could see Pillsover starting hot-footed to run down the four sets of books one by one, even waiting for their arrival at the homes of their purchasers. It was a desperate gamble, with odds of three to one against him, but the stake was worth it. There was nothing for me to do but to pursue the same tactics, to chase the wandering book-cases over the face of the earth until I had

124]

The Tale of the Wandering Book-Case

found the right one and pray that I might overtake it ahead of Pillsover.

It was a most formidable task that lay before me. I shrewdly guessed that Pillsover would hurry to one of the farthest points of the circuit in the hope of throwing me off the scent. I therefore set out post-haste for Skowhegan, in the first stage of the spectacular race for the King's Whisker. There I learned that my rival had reached town ahead of me. The gentleman who was expecting the box of books told me that they had not yet arrived, but that a man calling himself an agent of Vellum & Co. had been anxiously inquiring after them.

It seemed that the miserable fellow Pills-over, wishing to hide his identity, had clapped on a false beard and was passing himself off as an agent with books to sell. He had been making a pretense of a house-to-house canvass, so I was told. If Pillsover intended resorting to such despicable dodges as this to hide his perfidy, I would fight him with his own weapons. Consulting a Skowhegan lawyer I was

J. Archibald McKackney

pleased to learn that there was a town ordinance forbidding all kinds of agents to vend or peddle without paying a tax and securing a license. The authorities were promptly informed of Pillsover's lawless operations, and he was arrested and thrown into jail over night. The constable caught him red-handed on a doorstep with a sample book in his hands so that I did not have to appear in the proceedings. I waited until the box of books arrived, was permitted to examine them, and found no missing whisker. Leaving Pillsover to cool his heels in the calaboose I headed for Burlington, Vermont, to seek the second book-case on my list.

I was delayed by missing my connections, and Pillsover, who was fined and released next morning, must have taken another and swifter route. At Burlington I found that the second consignee, Jonas Harding, was an eccentric old codger who lived six miles out in the country. I chartered a livery rig and sought his home with the greatest possible expedition. About half the distance had been

The Tale of the Wandering Book-Case

covered when the clatter of wheels made me look behind. A buggy was fairly careening down the long hill, the horse at a gallop. Leaning far over the dashboard and plying a whip was none other than Pillsover, red in the face, shouting like a madman. I give you my word I hardly knew the man. He had thrown prudence and self-respect to the winds. He had forsaken his ambush. The capture of the Royal Whisker had already obsessed him. Apparently he had no thought for the future. The lust of the chase had so gripped him that he was ready to fight for the prize. I myself had become keyed up to such a desperate state of mind that I could scarcely blame him.

When he recognized me he uttered a yell that curdled my blood, and urged his poor beast with more fury than before. I drew my whip and slashed my willing steed. I could not let Pillsover beat me to the second book-case. It was a break-neck race of almost three miles over a rock-strewn country road, up hill and down. I could only pray that my rig would hold together, as we bounded and caromed

J. Archibald McKackney

along side by side, or within two or three lengths of each other.

Half a mile from the finish Pillsover began to draw ahead. He had the better horse, and when he saw that I could not overtake him he cast a look at me over his shoulder that was positively fiendish. I had to watch him whirl into Mr. Jonas Harding's yard door in a cloud of dust, a good hundred yards ahead of me. When I leaped from my buggy he had vanished through the front door. As I ran after him an old man bolted into my arms yelling, "Fire, thieves, burglars! Help! There's one of 'em in the parlor and here's another a-helling after him."

I shouted reassurances in the old man's ear, but he brushed me aside, caught up a wooden bottomed chair, and would have brained me on the spot had I not dodged through the parlor door. I had time to glimpse Pillsover in the act of yanking books from a case by the armful. Then the wooden-bottomed chair caught me in the small of the back and I sprawled headlong on top of Pillsover. As I

128]



“The wooden-bottomed chair caught me in the small of the back.”

tried to scramble to my knees my hand fell upon volume fifteen. The gilded lettering gleamed like fire. In a flash I recognized it as the book I sought. Tucking it under my arm I made one spring for the nearest open window. Not even my coat-tails touched as I flew through it like a bird. Climbing into my buggy I drove pell-mell toward Burlington, and as the vehicle spun into the highway on one wheel I heard the sounds of battle raging in Mr. Jonas Harding's parlor.

While I steered my galloping steed with one hand I opened the book between my knees. Alas, my gallant struggle had been in vain. The royal whisker was still missing. I was reasonably sure that Pillsover had not examined this book when I fell upon it, and therefore there was nothing to do but hasten in pursuit of the third book-case.

Pillsover was covering ground with fairly infernal energy, I will say that much for him. In fact I was in the library of the third consignee, in Harrisburg, when I saw him dash up the front steps. My host had promised

130]

The Tale of the Wandering Book-Case

to say nothing of my visit, as I wished to confuse my rival as much as possible. Therefore I slipped behind a portière as Pillsover was ushered into the room by a servant. He was left alone for a few minutes, and I had the pleasure of seeing him tiptoe to a corner of the library and fumble with the glass door of the Vellum & Co. book-case. He was in such clumsy haste to get at the books that he tugged too hard at the catch. The case had not been solidly placed. It toppled and fell over on Pillsover with a terrific crash, and several plaster statuettes smote him on the head with great force. I paused only long enough to view him prostrate with a large bust of Dante resting on the back of his neck. Then I fled to catch a train for Richmond.

By a most arduous process of elimination I had been able to determine beyond a shadow of doubt that the parchment envelope was in volume fifteen of the fourth consignment which had been shipped to Micah P. Rogers of Richmond. I found him without difficulty, and Pillsover had not yet appeared on this

J. Archibald McKackney

horizon. Neither had the book-case. It seems that after waiting for a reasonable period, Mr. Rogers had notified the express company. The local agent was unable to find any traces of the missing box of goods. More investigation convinced the parties interested that it had somehow gone astray between New York and Richmond. Every effort was being made to locate the missing package, and I had no other course than to confide in Mr. Rogers and ask him to forward the precious document to my home as soon as the shipment should reach him. I was very nervous and apprehensive that the pestiferous Pillsover might find a way to get his hands on it, but I was worn out with traveling night and day, and there might be weeks of futile waiting.

Wearied and disappointed I started to return to New York. My train was not more than an hour beyond Richmond when it was blocked by a wreck. A brakeman informed me that the tracks could not be cleared for several hours. Therefore I walked ahead to watch the wrecking crews at work. A number

132]

The Tale of the Wandering Book-Case

of cars of merchandise were strewn about in frightful confusion. Fire had broken out among the splintered express cars and their contents, and the train crews were fighting it with bucket brigades.

Another passenger train coming in the opposite direction from mine was standing on the other side of the blockade. Its people were also walking along the track to view the interesting scene at close range. Foremost among them I recognized Pillsover, evidently bound for Richmond. His head was bandaged and a strip of plaster gleamed athwart his nose. As I drew nearer the one side of the blazing wreckage, he approached closer to the other until we were glaring across the smoking barrier perhaps a hundred feet apart. He could see that I was a passenger on the train that had left Richmond earlier in the day, and he was forced to conclude, of course, that the parchment envelope and the Royal Whisker were in my pocket. His emotions must have been tormenting in the extreme, for several times he shook his fist at me. I

J. Archibald McKackney

assumed as triumphant an expression as possible, and stared at him with haughty contempt.

The wind shifting, I was able to walk nearer the wreck, and presently my eye was drawn to a smashed packing-case that had been tossed down the embankment to the edge of the burning area. Where the planking had been ripped away I thought I saw several dark-green books protruding. Moving closer I noticed that more books lay scattered about on the grass and among the lumber just beyond.

My curiosity was aroused. I ran down the slope as near the wreck as the frightful heat would permit. When a dozen feet away I felt almost certain that these were books of the same edition which I sought. If so, they must be billed to Richmond. The chance of their being the Rogers shipment was overwhelming.

While I stood gazing at them, trying to shield my face with my coat, a yell rose from beyond the wreck. Pillsover had made the same discovery and jumped at the same con-
134]

The Tale of the Wandering Book-Case



“The wretch was crawling toward the box on hands and knees.”

clusion. I must act on the instant or not at all. The wretch was crawling toward the box on hands and knees, coughing and choking for breath. I pulled my coat over my head

[135

J. Archibald McKackney

and tried to fight my way along the embankment. The gusty wind veered suddenly and drove a deadly sheet of flame between me and the box. Driven back I watched the greedy fire lick around the prize I sought. Dimly I could see Pillsover reeling back beaten, with his face in his hands. Baffled, he and I watched the precious shipment burst into flames.

Presently a charred bit of paper fluttered past me. I clutched it, and my fingers closed on a bit of smoking parchment. I sniffed it eagerly, and detected the odor of burning hair. There was no doubt that the Royal Whisker had perished on this imposing pyre.

**THE TALE OF
THE SHIPWRECKED PARENT**

CHAPTER VI

THE TALE OF THE SHIPWRECKED PARENT

I WAS enjoying a quiet afternoon with my notebooks in my London lodgings. I had been in England only three weeks and already my researches had been rewarded by the discovery of two very uncommon species or patterns of the Human Whisker. The portraits of their wearers were in process of being painted by competent artists, and I was in the midst of cataloguing these treasures according to my own system of classification and nomenclature when a commotion in the street caused me to hasten to the window.

A four-wheeler was maneuvering near the curb in a most surprising manner. Now the vehicle would sweep a circle and approach the door, then it would halt and back a few

J. Archibald McKackney

yards, while from within issued a series of shrill commands that fairly crackled with profanity. I was able to hear the turbulent passenger cry with formidable fury:

“Hard a-starboard, you swab! Now easy with your hellum. Don’t you know enough to let her come up into the wind when you’re making a landing?”

The harassed cab made another dizzy circuit, and finally stopped at the curb. The door was flung open and there emerged a huge beard of Titian red followed by its sturdy owner, Hank Wilkins, my faithful assistant and the companion of many of my wanderings. He beckoned to the driver, who handed him down a bit of plank and a coil of rope. Then Mr. Wilkins carefully moored the horse, stern and bow, to the footscraper on the doorstep, after which he laid one end of the plank inside the cab and the other on the curb, thus making a little bridge. Touching his hat with a sailorly salute he addressed the interior of the cab:

“All’s made fast shipshape and proper,
140]

The Tale of the Shipwrecked Parent

father. Hawser's ashore and gangplank out. Come on, if you please."

A sprightly old man darted into view and ran down the gangplank. He was so gaunt that his clothes fairly flopped about his withered frame. His weather-browned face resembled a shriveled pippin and his hawk-like nose swooped down to meet his concave chin.

"All taut, my boy," he piped in a voice like the wind singing through a ship's rigging. "If I hadn't been along that lubber on the poop 'ud have smashed us into smithereens, hey, boy?"

Mr. Wilkins grasped his fellow-voyager by the arm and led him indoors. I met them in the hall and Wilkins explained with some embarrassment:

"This is my aged parent, sir. I ran afoul of him by sheer accident, and found he was even more set in his ways than when I last clapped eyes on him. The only way I could fetch him up from the docks was to let him play he was cruisin' ashore. I hadn't seen the

J. Archibald McKackney

old codger for twenty-odd years, and thought he was lost in the wreck of the Australia clipper *Hyder Ally*. I knew him the second he raised a yell in my wake and came runnin' after me, but I was a bit puzzled at first because he used to wear a beard, and now his face is as shy of hair as a china nest egg."

I coaxed the pair into my sitting room, and placed the briny and erratic parent behind a scotch-and-soda. He dipped his beak in the glass, threw back his head and slid the drink down his wizened throat without blinking. His offspring commented:

"He steams by fits and starts, sir. His safety-valve is pretty near due to blow off again and then you'll hear him waste language at an awful rate. Where have you been, dear father? You haven't squandered any postage stamps on your only child." The parent slapped the table with his skinny hand, smacked his lips and began to drone as if the lever of a phonograph had been released:

"The *Hyder Ally* was foundered in the Injun Ocean and I was the only man of her
142]



“A sprightly old man darted into view and ran down the gangplank.”

J. Archibald McKackney

crew that drifted ashore. And me and the bit of plank I was clinging to like a barnacle was tossed on the beach of an island that wasn't down on any charts at all. I discovered it, and named it Lemuel Wilkins, his island, by gum. And there was people on this Lemuel Wilkins Island, big brown savages with no more manners or morals than this big red-whiskered son of mine. And the men on that island, *they* had whiskers, too, tropical, luxuriant whiskers they was, oh, such wonderful growths. When they come down to the beach to pick me up, they was truly a rare and noble sight.

“It was the fact of my wearin’ a fine up-standing beard that saved my life. They gave me a hut and fed me up, and I was treated with respect. It wasn’t a month before I was beginnin’ to talk their lingo and pick up their ways. One of the first things I noticed that was awful curious was that every morning all the men sat in the sun and dressed their whiskers most particular with combs made out of sharks’ teeth. Then they washed ’em and

144]

The Tale of the Shipwrecked Parent

holystoned 'em with some kind of ointment and little fiber brushes and spread them out to dry.

"I figgered that it was healthy for me to follow the majority as long as I had to sojourn on Lemuel Wilkins Island. While my whiskers wasn't as fine and silky and luxurious as the savages, they was pretty fair for a fo'ksle growth. So I borrowed a comb and a squeegee and began to tend my chin-warmers as careful and assiduous as my neighbors. This made a hit with 'em from the start, and even the king was kind enough to pass me out a few encouraging words.

"Bime-by I learned that among my islanders rank and office was decided by reason of the longest, bushiest whiskers. It was like this, do you understand: the king held his berth only until some other man of the tribe happened along with a finer set of whiskers. Then the unfortunate ruler had to climb off his perch and make way for a new monarch. The poor old discard let his whiskers get all neglected and frowsy, like the jig was up and he'd

J. Archibald McKackney

lost the number of his mess for keeps. The next highest chief or prime minister was the Johnny with the second finest whiskers, and so on down the line until you come to the Comb and Whisker Bearer to His Royal Nibs.

“It might ha’ been one year, and it might ha’ been a hundred and forty-seven years for all I know, when I found by measurin’ my whiskers every morning that they had reached their limit. They had sprouted every last blankety blank sprout there was in ’em. Then with fear and trembling I signified my intention of entering the next competition for office, which was held every six months. It was something like Civil Service examinations. I played in hard luck that trip, for this here competition brought out the finest collection of prize whiskers ever seen on Lemuel Wilkins Island. It had been fine growin’ weather, lots of showers and sunshine, and them native-bred tropical varieties took to it kindlier than my brand, which was reared in the temperate zone.

The Tale of the Shipwrecked Parent



“Hallelujah, I won by an eighth of an inch.”

“When the Royal Surveyor came along the line with the official measurin’ rods I was all ’et up with excitement. I didn’t have no show to be a king, but there was several snug berths that I had an eye on, and it was going to be a close finish between me and the other mejium growths. Hallelujah, I won by an eighth of an inch, and was made Captain of the Royal Body Guard.

J. Archibald McKackney

“There was only one sorrow in my year and a half at that job. An Italian barber was washed ashore from a wrecked liner, and when we found a razor in his pocket I was foolish enough to tell the King what it was for. He ordered the poor castaway to be stoned to death with green cocoanuts, for there was no reasoning with His Bloodthirsty Majesty. The barber was a heretic, a blasphemer, a menace to law and order, and several other things, and I couldn't save him from his fate. The royal notion was that any man that dare lay hand on a whisker with felonious intentions was a hidjus monster, and had ought to be exterminated quicker 'n scat.

“I disremember how many years it was before there came to pass what is called in the history of Lemuel Wilkins Island ‘The Red Whisker Rebellion.’ There was a tradition that some day a man with a red beard would come from Heaven or appear in some kind of astonishin' manner, and he would be the great and exalted King and reign forever and ever, amen. I used to sit under a cocoanut tree and
148]

The Tale of the Shipwrecked Parent

mourn that all the brains of the family went to the inside of my head and all the red hair to the outside of my boy Hank's. That didn't help none, me being a bloomin' brunette by profession, and I logged it along on my humble but happy course until the man from Maaloo Island come sneakin' ashore with his damn conspiracy. It was kept under cover awful close for six months or so. And it was a sad day for me when I fell an easy prey to his horrid temptations. It wasn't natural for a white man to stay satisfied with such tupenny jobs as Captain of Police and Maker of Whisker Combs for the Palace by Royal Warrant. I was itching for authority in high places, but my whiskers couldn't match my ambitions.

"The man from Maaloo Island had me sized up as the abiding place of the cankerin' worm of ambition with a big A. And when me and my crew that was divin' after pearls was blown into Maaloo Island harbor by a gale of wind, he renewed his hellish overtures and unfolded his plot. Him and a pal of his

J. Archibald McKackney

had discovered an herb which would make a dyestuff that was warranted not to fade, crock or get rusty in three lifetimes. It was their copper-fastened secret, and they had tried it on several sets of false whiskers. These appendages they had hung in the scorchin' sun and left out in the rain and towed behind 'em at sea for four years. And the crimson tint of them whiskers hadn't altered enough to be visible to the naked eye.

"The man from Maaloo Island had a brother that hadn't been home since he was a boy. Being a perfect stranger to all hands in them waters, the plot was to dye the brother's whiskers red, he having the most wonderful natural bunch in all the Injun Ocean. Then they was to land him on Lemuel Wilkins Island with some kind of flim-flam and deludin' ceremonies, like he had hopped off a passin' cloud.

"It looked all right. My poor islanders had never seen no dyestuff of any kind, and they didn't know that red whiskers grewed anywhere except where their gods come from.

150]

The Tale of the Shipwrecked Parent

It was as easy as stealing the handles from your grandmother's coffin.

"I was to help the game along all I could, usin' my pull with the police in case of trouble, and this dyed-in-the wool King swore he'd make me his right hand man and executive officer. But I didn't have to lift a finger when his Sacred Red Whiskers landed. He was discovered at sun-up chumming with the wooden gods of the tribe as if he had fell among a bunch of long-lost brothers. The Lemuel Wilkins Islanders flopped on their knees and surrendered, hook, line and sinker, body, soul and breeches which they didn't have none. The cheap human being of a King that was in power was tipped on his royal head and the Red Whiskers God took the throne without a murmur. Then he picked me as the spoiled darling of his muster roll, and nobody dared whimper. Oh, but them were brief but beautiful years!

"It was a fifty-pound case of plug tobacco that ruined Lemuel Wilkins. It was cast ashore from some wreck or other, and I wel-

J. Archibald McKackney

comed it with songs of rejoicing. And being grateful to the Red Whiskered King, I taught him how to chew. He took to it like a seaman to rum. And we'd pass the warm, starlit evenings clampin' our jaws on chunks of good old 'Bristol Navy' and feel our hearts expand with love for our fellow men. He wasn't a neat chewer, being strange and uneducated, and he used to trickle some when he spit. He had hopes of bein' able to hit a knothole at ten feet, like me, but he was a mere apprentice, so to speak.

"We went to bed in the dark on that fatal night after an exciting round of target practice at the knothole, and I had no chance to warn him. At daylight he strode forth to meet the head men and petty officials of the tribe for a sacred pow-wow. The rays of the rising sun lit up his Heaven-descended whiskers like a bonfire of tar barrels.

"There was a wild roar from his followers. I heard the hell-raisin' racket and rushed to the scene. There was a streak of brown and another of gray runnin' halfway down his

152]

The Tale of the Shipwrecked Parent

beard. I dassent believe my eyes. The petty chiefs was crowding in around him, utterin' shrill cries. Alas, it was too true. The dye-stuff from Maaloo Island hadn't been made proof against the continued and corrodin' effects of tobacco juice. It had done its deadly devastation over night. The Sacred Whiskers had begun to crock and run.

"The Head Groom of the Bed Chamber was summoned on the jump. His acute and expert vision could not be fooled. He pronounced the whiskers a harrowing imitation that might have been made in Germany. Then the chiefs held a formal trial. I wasn't there. I was wildly searchin' for a seagoing canoe when they dragged me back from the beach. Five hours later the bogus god had been beaten to death with war clubs, and a bona fide human or home-grown set of whiskers was reigning in his stead. He had confessed all, miserable wretch that he was, and I was accused and tried for conspiracy.

"No, they didn't kill me, but they done me much worse. I was condemned to have my

whiskers pulled out with pincers, every last hair of 'em. Do you fathom what that meant? With a face as clean as a billiard ball I was no longer fit to be with men. I was disrated, cast out, dishonored, fit only to do wimmin's work. And they made me do it. It was that or starve. *They put me to work in the laundry*, doing up the royal whisker covers what was put on by the King and his Cabinet at night, same as we use nightcaps. There is things worse than death, just as the Good Book says that the bite of an ungrateful son is more grievous than the sting of a serpent."

The unfortunate parent let his head sink between his shoulders like a mournful old bird on its roost, and wiped one beady eye with the cuff of his sleeve. It seemed indelicate to press him with questions, and Hank Wilkins and I waited in attitudes of respectful attention. At length the parent rubbed his smooth and shining chin with the back of his hand, and the touch of it awoke his wrath to seek vent in speech.

"Doomed to wander whiskerless over the
154]

The Tale of the Shipwrecked Parent



“And laugh in his bushy beard till the tears ran down into it.”

face of the earth was
I wasn't allowed to
Humiliations were
overflowing. The
to the laundry and

l,” on, “though
in to any extent.
I upon me, full and
used to saunter down
on a tub carved from a

J. Archibald McKackney

solid log and laugh in his bushy beard till the tears ran down into it and hung there like diamonds. Years and years and ages and ages I toiled in this disgustin' manner, and there was no balm or whisker restorer in Gilead for the wreck of what had once been the high-steppin' and proud-spirited Lemuel Wilkins.

“ At last I escaped from them torments. It was in a Dutch gunboat that discovered the island and sent a boat in shore to chart the reefs. Disguised as a tubful of washing, I made my way to the beach by night and swum off to the Dutchmen. If there had been one red-whiskered man aboard the vessel I'd ha' made a desperate attempt to lead a rebellion with him and upset the ruling dynasty. But there was no such luck, and they landed me in Batavia without a penny, yes, even poorer by the length of my whiskers than when I had been washed ashore on Lemuel Wilkins Island. On my way home I picked up a monkey that had been owned by a deaf and dumb man in Borneo. He had taught the

156]

The Tale of the Shipwrecked Parent

intelligent animal to talk the sign language to him, usin' its hands and feet with surprisin' fluency. That there double-ended monkey, Four-handed Jacob, is the only friend I've got in the world. I'm teachin' him to conduct dialogues with himself and——"

I was impolite enough to break into the rambling monotone of the shipwrecked parent. I told him that it had occurred to me that Lemuel Wilkins Island was waiting for his son Hank as its lawful and predestinated sovereign. Nor did I feel that I ought to stand in the way of such glittering advancement. Here was this fine fellow, Hank Wilkins, owner of the most superb Titian beard in the world, if I knew anything about whisker values. And in the Indian Ocean was a throne that belonged to him. And more than that, I hoped to be able to accompany him to Lemuel Wilkins Island. If Hank Wilkins had been shown the way to a throne by the revelation of his shipwrecked parent, then I had been privileged to discern a new and wonderful opportunity for extending my researches

among the rare species of the Human Whisker. To think of visiting this island, where whiskers were encouraged and cherished by custom, tradition and the stimulus of ambition, fired my soul with unbounded ardor. And with Hank Wilkins as ruler, by grace of his peerless Titian beard, there would be no limit to my novel investigations. I hastened to console the shipwrecked parent and my voice rang with enthusiasm:

“Never fear, Lemuel Wilkins. You are the sire of the genuine Hair Apparent. We shall sail for the Indian Ocean on the first steamer out of England. And when Hank Wilkins has come into his kingdom, you shall be summoned as Prime Minister, and you shall be allowed to boil the deposed monarch to death in a laundry tub. And meantime you and Four-handed Jacob shall be liberally pensioned.”

THE ABDICATION OF KING
WILKINS I

CHAPTER VII

ABDICATION OF KING WILKINS I

(quoted from the author's diary for the
year 1904.)

APRIL 5th.—After interminable weeks at
sea, weeks beset with doubts and fears
hopes, our fondest dreams have come
The night has fallen on our first day
Emuel Wilkins Island. As I write, the
light flickers upon the bronzed forms of
stalwart native bodyguard, and throws
bold silhouette their incomparable sets of
ficial whiskers. These treasures are all that
Shipwrecked Parent led me to hope for,
I picture to myself happy months to come,
h camera, sketching tablets and note books.
haps I shall be able once more to organize
f Hirsute Orchestra, here where the rarest of
al qualities are waiting to be grouped and
ned, here where the steady sweep of the
[161

The Abdication of King Wilkins I

combing his whiskers as he moved with kingly stride. I slumped down on a bit of driftwood, my head in my hands, and waited for Heaven alone knew what. The moments dragged horribly, but it could not have been more than an hour before I heard shouts re-echoing from the grove, shouts of joy which merged into some kind of a slow, chanting music. Presently Hank Wilkins came from among the trees. His head was bound with a fillet of leaves, a fiber cloak was draped from his massive shoulders; and behind him streamed scores of villagers, dancing, singing, waving palm branches. Now and then a group of them would hurry on ahead to look at the oriflamme of a beard that lured them on, and to bow and posture before it in the most complete adoration.

I was panic-smitten, however, when a number of men rushed straight at me, and brandished clubs as if about to dash out my innocent brains. With savage shouts and fierce gestures, Hank Wilkins restrained his ardent followers, and hastened to embrace me and

J. Archibald McKackney

throw his cloak across my shoulders. While he was convincing the islanders by means of this pantomime that I was his friend he managed to tell me:

"My whiskers won in a walk, but it was uncomfortable for a while. 'Once bit, twice shy,' and they made me soak my beard in a tubful of powdered plug tobacco and water before they were sure I was the real thing. Follow me to the palace, and cast your eyes on the lovely specimens in my wake."

Upon my soul, the prodigious beards of our escort formed a sort of human jungle. They were trimmed and trained in such wholly original patterns as to convince me that the art of wearing whiskers has fatally degenerated among civilized races. I shook the hand of His Majesty King Wilkins I. in silent ecstasy. We did not catch even a glimpse of the luckless ruler so suddenly deposed by reason of our advent. He had climbed the back fence of the palace yard, his inadequate and superseded whiskers his only luggage, and fled by sea well ahead of the mob.



“Behind him streamed scores of villagers.”

J. Archibald McKackney

We entered the royal apartments to the sound of drums and horns, and made ourselves at home. The Groom of the Royal Bed Chamber at once set to work anointing and combing the royal and supernal beard of King Wilkins I in token of the official installation. I was left free to begin my researches, and by nightfall I had photographed and catalogued two absolutely unique growths, and was as happy as a truant school boy.

May 3.—Our island has been invaded by a young woman of our own race, a most astonishing and incredible event. I was drawn to the beach this forenoon by a great outcry and stampede from my village, and hurried after, to find a small schooner driving ashore, dismasted and helpless. Her native crew was trying to launch a boat as the doomed vessel drifted toward the roaring surf that pounded over the inside reef. The boat was swamped even before it could be manned, and our brave villagers rushed to their fishing canoes which had been pulled above high water.

But before they could attempt a rescue,
166]

The Abdication of King Wilkins I

King Wilkins I came tearing through the crowd, roaring commands, and in a twinkling he had picked a crew and was urging them into the breakers. The brave fellows toiled like madmen. Thrice the giant seas beat them back and whirled their canoe end over end. But they followed the flaming beard of their leader as if it were a banner of war, and at length the canoe crossed the reef in clouds of spray.

Soon a driving rain veiled the schooner from our sight, and an hour passed before the canoe reappeared. Then, amid a storm of cheers from shore, it was flung far upon the sand. I rushed to pick up the inanimate form of a young white female, but the dripping Wilkins shoved me aside, and swinging her against his shoulder he ran toward the palace. He gasped as I trotted at his side:

“Miss Hulda Barnstable of Walpole, Mass.—missionary bound to the Peace Island group. Old gent that convoyed her was washed overboard yesterday and lost.”

May 10.—I am not ungallant by nature,

J. Archibald McKackney

but I have begun to wish to Heaven that the young missionary female had chosen some other island for the scene of her shipwreck. She has an attractive personality in her demure, prim way, and her eyes are uncommonly fetching. But in one short week she has managed to demoralize the government of Lemuel Wilkins Island, and to play the very devil with my well-ordered round of scientific investigation. King Wilkins I promised to send her on her way in the first vessel he could lay his hands on, but for the last day or so he has appeared to care precious little about sighting a sail.

Miss Hulda Barnstable is of that annoying New England type that can hear a call of duty from the Antipodes and is always cocked and primed to regenerate any community except its own. She was not asked to right any wrongs or save any souls on Lemuel Wilkins Island, but already she has expressed in the strongest language her contempt for an elderly gentleman who will waste his golden years in studying and collecting the Human
168]

The Abdication of King Wilkins I

Whisker. She has even begun to set the natives against me, and is actually preaching the damnable doctrine that their pride in their whiskers is sinful and disgusting. As for the King, he is not like himself. I have the gravest doubts of his being able to make a firm stand against the New England conscience when reinforced by a pair of fine gray eyes.

May 15. — Early this evening Wilkins launched into a story of his troubles. His impassioned monologue lasted an hour, and the gist of it was as follows:

“Mr. McKackney, I have never failed you yet, nor sidestepped any proposition that I once laid my hand to. You will recall that I took my life in one hand and my camera in the other when I got you the picture of the Insane Cossack with the Pink Whiskers that is the gem of your collection to this day. But I never lost my sleep o’ nights before, nor watched my appetite slide out from under me till it would disgrace a hard-working humming bird. And what is it all about? Why, the very thing that you and me have made the

J. Archibald McKackney

business of our lives and been d—n proud of; the very thing that fetched us to this island, where we were so happy until——”

Wilkins pulled at his beard and stared down at this mainspring of his sovereignty with a significant frown. Then he resumed:

“What is it? *It is Whiskers. She abominates 'em.* No, don't interrupt me. I don't want to have to be disrespectful, even though I *am* a king and you are my naturalized subject with the rank of Royal Whisker Inspector by brevet. But I can't allow you to criticize the doings or the motives of Miss Hulda Barnstable of Walpole, Mass. I repeat, *she abominates 'em*, hook, line and sinker. Whiskers to her sensitive soul are hateful, disturbin', odjus, like rattlesnakes. And I can't blame her, of course. Only I wish—I wish the foundations of my throne wasn't built on my Titian beard.

“I might as well tell you, sir, why she possesses this amazin' distaste for that noblest work of God, to wit, the Human Whisker.” Wilkins continued after a lugubrious silence.

The Abdication of King Wilkins I

“And you won’t blame her a bit. It seems that when she was a slip of a girl, in her early teens, her maternal uncle, Jedediah Stokes by name, wore a set of whiskers of which he was tremendously fond. As well as I can gather from her rough description, they were of the ‘*Chin-warmer Vulgaris*’ pattern—a very common growth, as you know, sir, with no artistic merit whatever. You have a plate and description of the variety in the Illustrated Catalogue. This Jedediah Stokes was a retired sea captain, who had piled up in the East India trade what amounted to a large fortune for a small New England town. This fortune he had willed to his widowed sister (who was the mother of the young missionary person) and to her children.

“The old barnacle lived with the Barnstable family, and being somewhat infirm by reason of his hardships endured at sea, he often fell asleep while reading beside the parlor table over which he used to flop with his head in his hands. His youngest nephew, a high-spirited boy of twelve, used to watch this

J. Archibald McKackney

lullaby performance with a good deal of interest. At last he hit upon the most unfortunate idea of applying a fresh coat of glue to the top of the table just before Uncle Jedediah fixed himself for one of these silly naps. The old man was already blinkin' and noddin' when the lad spilled the glue under pretense of looking for a book. Then from the doorway the young limb o' Satan watched the poor old mariner's head bob lower and lower until his prodigal whiskers was streaming full and free across the table. Then the nephew hastily ducked and took a station by a window outside, where his line of retreat was open.

"It seems that Uncle Jedediah woke up with a snort and threw his head back hard and sudden. To his immense rage and surprise he fetched the table along with him, and so securely was he moored that after one or two frantic plunges, which upset the lamp and other bric-a-brac, he was forced to kneel beside the table, bellowing with pain, while the family rushed for scissors and axes to cut him clear. Meantime the house caught fire from
172]

The Abdication of King Wilkins I



“Uncle Jedediah woke up with a snort.”

the upset lamp, Uncle Jedediah was forsaken and forgotten, and he escaped to the street, draggin' the table with him and shrieking at every jump. He had to have his whiskers hacked off at the roots, and the result was that he disowned, repudiated, cussed out and disinherited the whole Barnstable family. From that day Miss Hulda Barnstable, whose nervous system had been severely jolted by this

J. Archibald McKackney

double tragedy, could not abide the sight of *whiskers*.

“ It’s a long walk from Walpole, Mass., to Lemuel Wilkins Island in the Indian Ocean,” solemnly concluded the monarch, “ but those fatal whiskers of Captain Jedediah Stokes, bein’ dead yet speaketh. And they are strong enough to shake the throne of King Wilkins I, and I’m not ashamed to confess it, sir.”

May 25.—To-day I interviewed Miss Hulda Barnstable, and had my worst forebodings and surmises confirmed. I found her in the palm-thatched pavilion, in front of which she has placed a sign :

“ DISTRICT SCHOOL No. 1.
Cocoanut Township.”

A class of brown cherubs was trying to sing “ From Greenland’s Icy Mountains ” as I entered with a good deal of timidity. Their teacher, who was becomingly attired in a freshly laundered duck skirt and white shirt waist, requested me to wait in silence until the “ first recess.” Meekly obedient, I stole out—
174]

The Abdication of King Wilkins I

side and noted that the tribesmen were giving the school house a wide berth, or, if their business took them past it, they went to a good deal of trouble to hide their whiskers. I reflected with bitterness that at this rate they would begin cutting their whiskers off before many moons. At length Miss Barnstable beckoned me to a bench under a nearby tree and said very firmly:

“Mr. J. Archibald McKackney, I cannot leave this island by swimming, and as long as I am compelled to remain here I propose to follow the path of Duty that lies plain before me. And I shall do everything in my power to persuade Mr.—er—King Wilkins I to abandon his hideous whiskers, and to abolish them root and branch among his misguided subjects. And *you* are *helping* this idolatrous Whisker Cult as its High Priest. I have made a beginning with my school children, who repeat in chorus each day:

“We’ll never, never use the weed
That bad men smoke and chew:

J. Archibald McKackney

The wine cup shall not pass our lips;
Down with the horrid brew.
We promise too, dear teacher, that
All whiskers are taboo."

I assured Miss Hulda Barnstable that I had no designs on the morals of the youth of Lemuel Wilkins Island. Then, as diplomatically as possible, I tried to show her that she was playing the very deuce with the throne itself, that Wilkins without his whiskers could not last two minutes, and that the traditions of ages had established the system of choosing monarchs by this hirsute qualification, and that by virtue of his unique red whiskers he was a good deal more than a common or garden potentate of mortal origin. "My dear young woman," I told her with a good deal of feeling, "let him alone. He is a first-rate king, and he enjoys it, or did until you began to mix yourself into affairs of state."

Miss Hulda Barnstable bit her lip and looked me very straight between the eyes as she retorted:

"Mr. Hank Wilkins will not cut off his
176]

The Abdication of King Wilkins I



“Perhaps he would prefer to work out this problem for himself, Mr. J. Archibald McKracken.”

whiskers unless he thinks the sacrifice worth while. Did you ever happen to think of it from that viewpoint? Perhaps he would pre-

J. Archibald McKackney

fer to work out this problem for himself, Mr. J. Archibald McKackney."

June 8.—The blow has fallen. For the last fortnight I have seen the inevitable climax drawing nearer and nearer. It was a splendidly dramatic situation. I will grant you that. There was no need of more confession from Wilkins. It was obvious that he was becoming more hopelessly enslaved by the young missionary person every day. I have long ago outlived the years of romance, but I will acknowledge that the plight of Wilkins awoke an interested flutter in the region of my heart. I wanted him to find happiness: but at the price of a throne? Ah, there was no getting away from the horns of *that* dilemma. It was as self-evident as a syllogism in a text book of logic and could be summed up in tabloid form:

Hank Wilkins reigns because of his whiskers.

Miss Hulda Barnstable will not marry him with
whiskers.

Ergo—he gives up the throne

Or he gives up the girl.

178]

The Abdication of King Wilkins I

With matters in this desperately hopeless condition, I stood aloof as an interested on-looker. My sympathies were with the Titian beard, over which fell destruction hovered. Then, too, I dreaded losing Wilkins as a comrade. I knew full well that this insanely prejudiced young woman would never consent to her husband's remaining in my employ as an assistant in harvesting the Human Whisker or as the curator of my collections. I was also haunted by the disappointment that would befall old Lemuel Wilkins, the shipwrecked parent. We had left him in England, waiting with his monkey, Four-handed Jacob, the simian semaphore, for the summons to join us as Prime Minister of the island.

It was an immense relief, therefore, to have an end made of this harrowing suspense. When Wilkins summoned me to the royal bed-chamber I was prepared for the worst. His demeanor was grave, but there was a twinkling light in his eye as he announced:

"I received word to-day that a schooner from Peace Island will touch here by to-mor-

J. Archibald McKackney

row night. I'm going in her. I hereby abdicate, jump the job, quit without notice. Miss Hulda Barnstable goes too. Will you join us?"

I shook his hand and congratulated him as heartily as I could under the circumstances. Alas, for my dreams of completing my unique researches on Lemuel Wilkins Island. I must join the retreat. I asked Wilkins if he intended leaving my employ. He shook his head with an air of sincere regret.

"*She simply abominates 'em,*" he said reluctantly. "I'm afraid you and I have chased the last whisker to its lair together. I've made my choice, sir. There's a brace of missionary sky-pilots on Peace Island. We will be married there, and she has agreed to give up her missionary projects in return for my surrenderin' a throne. Maybe I'll buy a farm somewhere near your place. Will you lend me your razor first thing in the morning, sir?"

THE END

